

SHANTALA

Shantala was the queen of Vishnu Vardhana, the ruler of the Hoysala kingdom. Brought up as a Jain, Shantala believed in ahimsa or non-violence. Her husband, on the other hand, had a single-minded ambition, to free Hoysala from the rule of the Chalukya Empire, whatever be the cost. He waged wars and unleashed death and destruction on hapless people.

Though Shantala, tragically, could not convince her husband to give up violence she was the glorious inspiration behind the temples that Vishnu Vardhana built, and which remain a lasting legacy of the Hoysala kingdom to this day.

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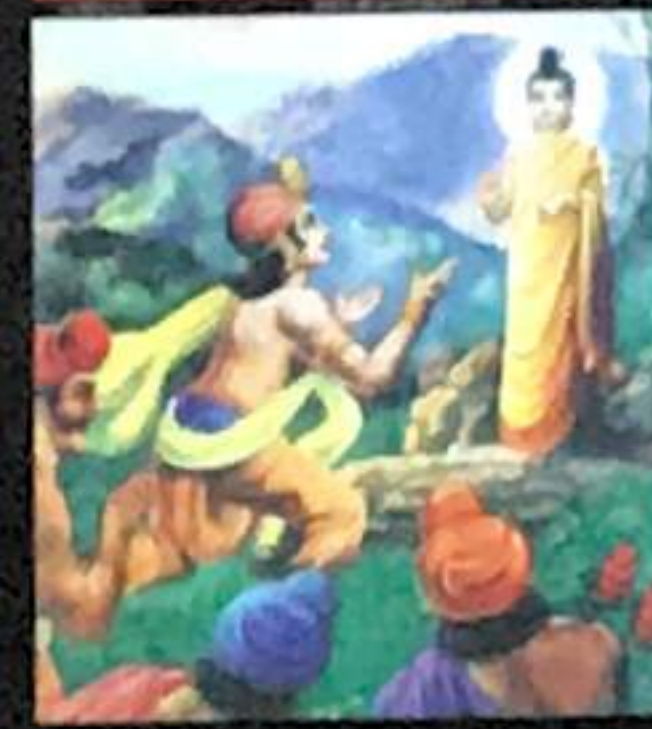
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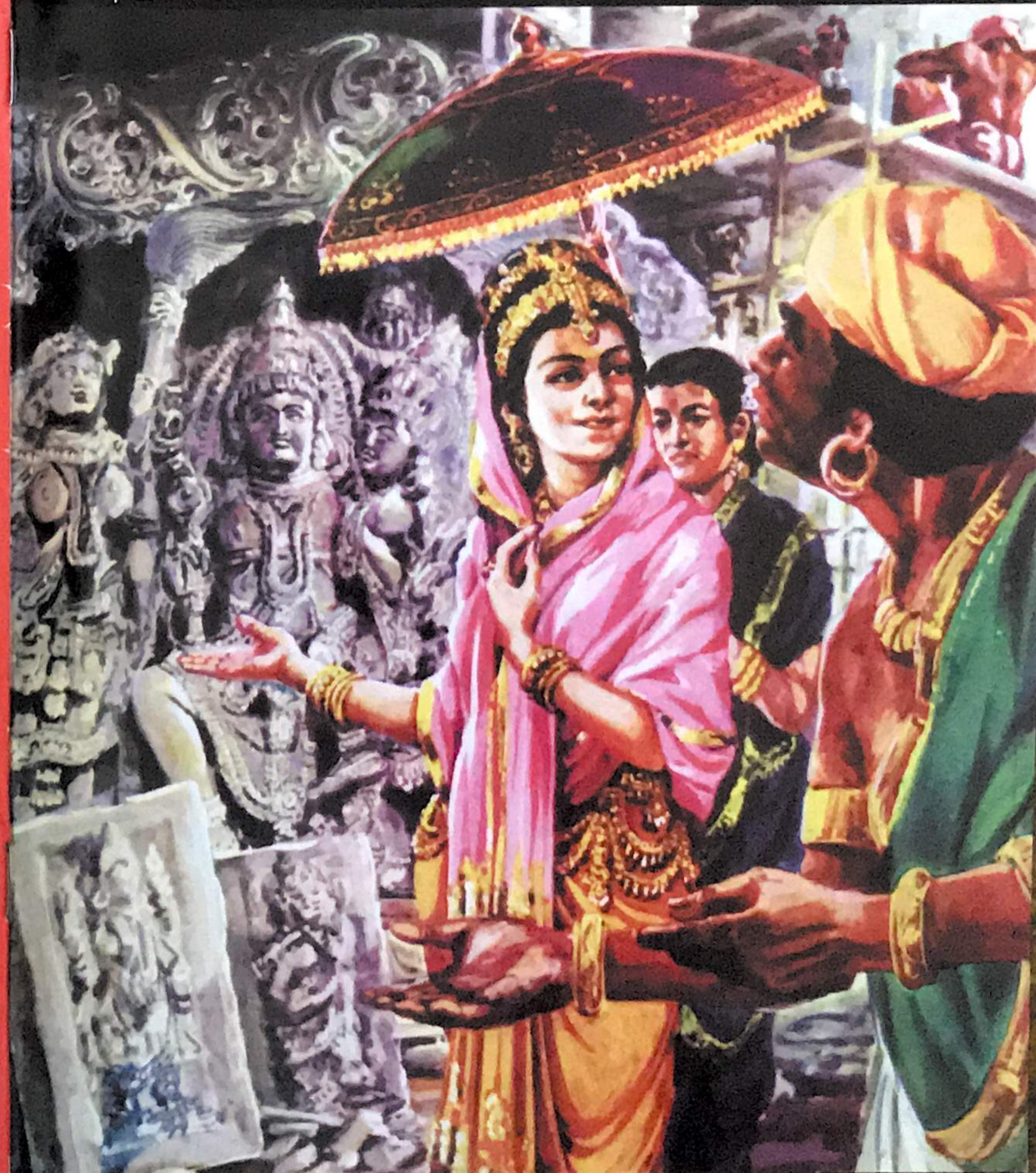
BRAVEHEARTS



SHANTALA

THE QUEEN WHO LOVED PEACE

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SHANTALA



IT WAS THE YEAR 1108. AT THE HOYSALA CAPITAL OF DORASAMUDRA, KING BALLALA THE FIRST LAY BURNING WITH FEVER.

HIS BROTHER, PRINCE BITTIDEVA, WAS AT HIS BEDSIDE.

BITTIGA, I KNOW THAT MY END IS NEAR...

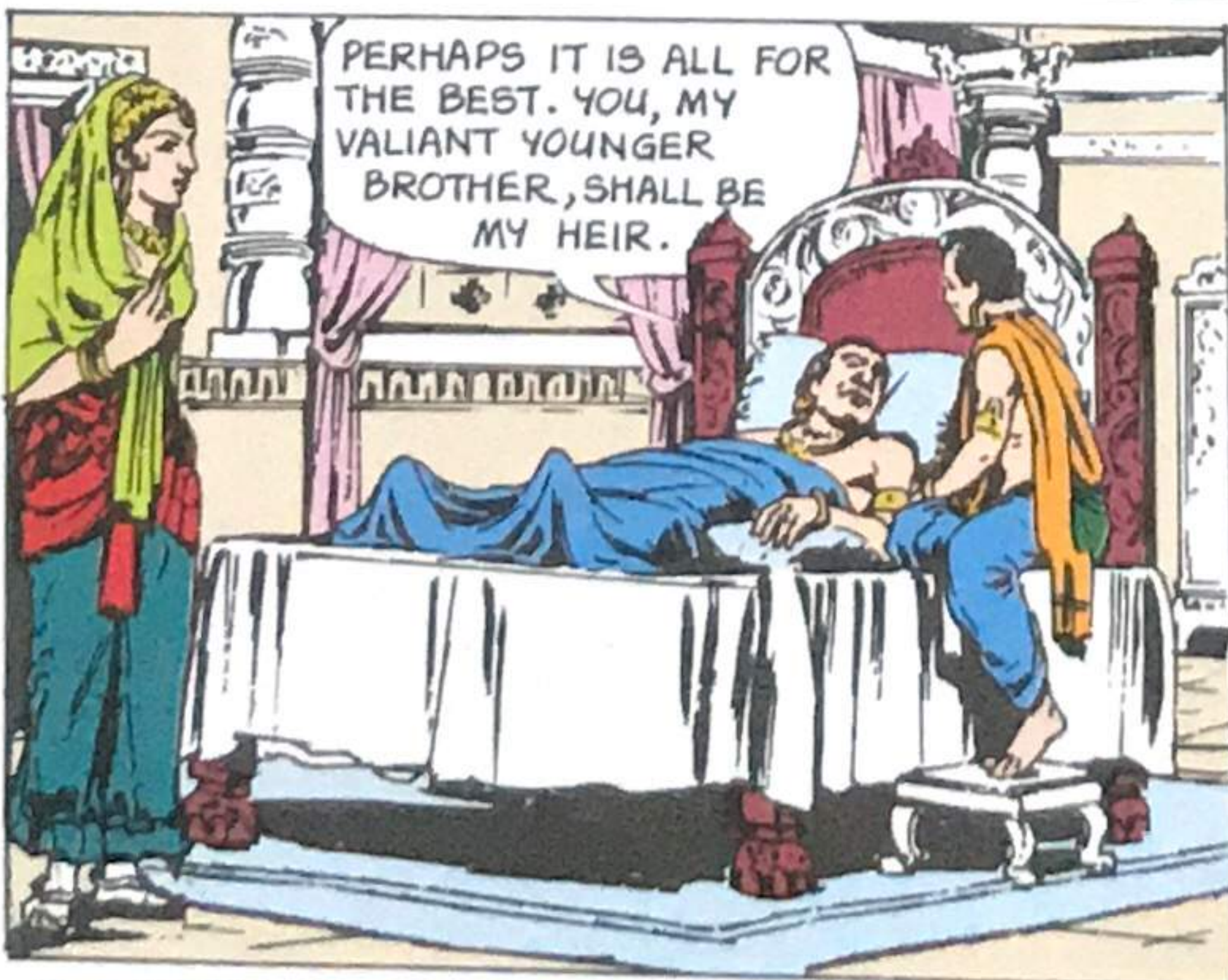
ANNA*, DON'T SPEAK THUS, I BEG YOU.



I HAVE NOT BEEN BLESSED WITH A SON—AN HEIR TO HOYSALA NADU.



PERHAPS IT IS ALL FOR THE BEST. YOU, MY VALIANT YOUNGER BROTHER, SHALL BE MY HEIR.



SUDDENLY, BALLALA'S EYES GREW MISTY.

AH! WHAT A DREAM WE CHERISHED! THOUGH I WILL BE GONE, BITTIGA, YOU MUST FIGHT THE CHALUKYA EMPEROR AND MAKE OUR DREAM COME TRUE.



* A TERM OF ADDRESS TO AN ELDER BROTHER



SHANTALA...
COME TO ME,
CHILD.

CHILD, MY BLESSINGS ARE ALWAYS
WITH BOTH OF YOU. AS MAN
AND WIFE...

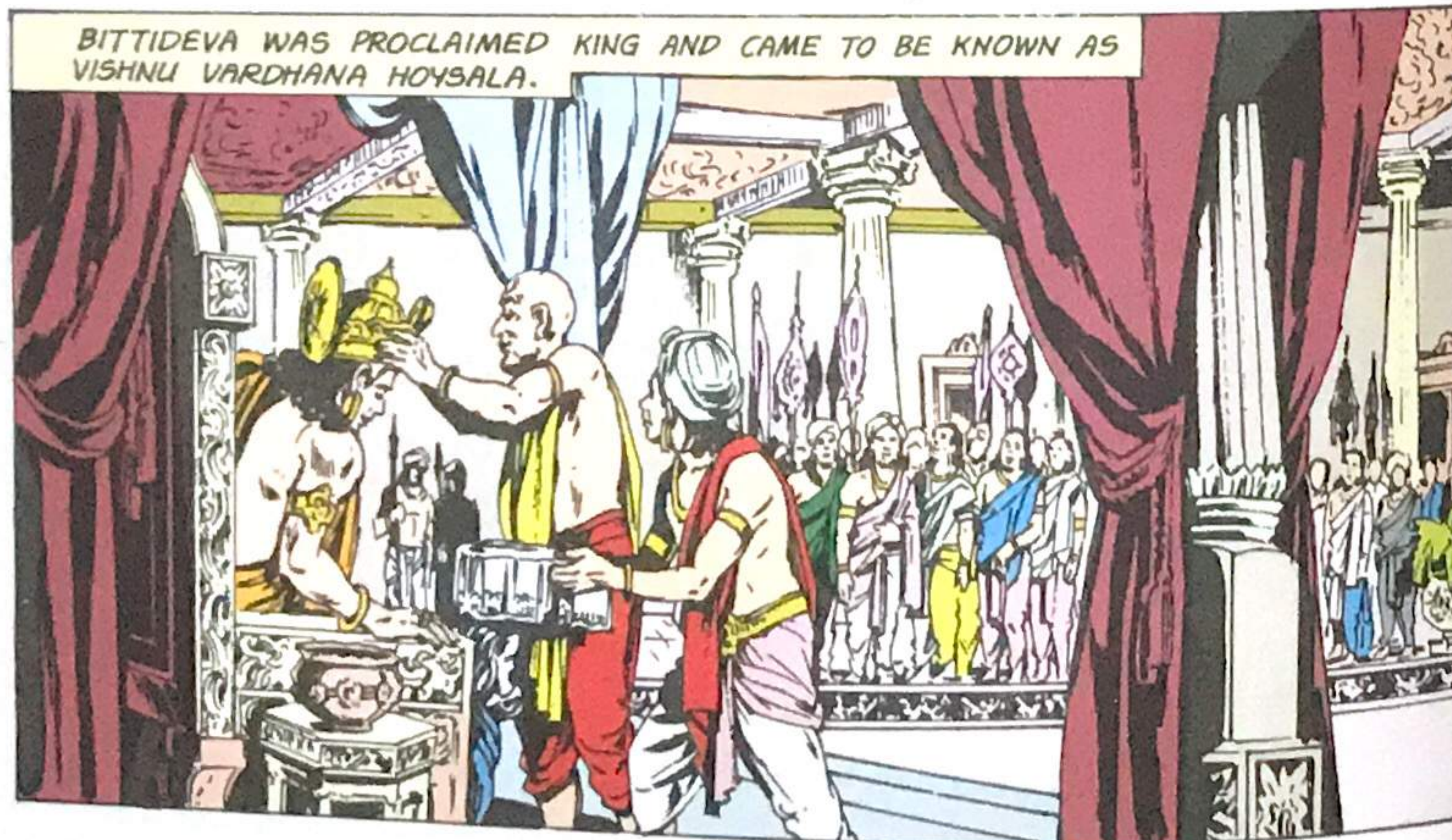


... YOU MUST THINK AS
ONE. GIVE EACH OTHER
SUPPORT ALL THROUGH
YOUR LIVES.



I LEAVE BITTIGA IN
YOUR HANDS. TAKE
CARE OF HIM.

SOON AFTER, BALLALA DIED.



BITTIDEVA WAS PROCLAIMED KING AND CAME TO BE KNOWN AS
VISHNU VARDHANA HOYSALA.



AND VISHNU VARDHANA HAD ONE GREAT AMBITION.

SHANTALA, ANNA'S
DEATH WAS CAUSED
BY THE CRUSHING
DEFEAT HE SUFFER-
ED AT THE HANDS
OF THE CHALUKYA
EMPEROR.



AND, BELIEVE ME,
I WILL AVENGE
THAT DEFEAT!



EVERY KINGDOM,
FROM BEYOND THE
TUNGABHADRA
TO THE KAVERI,
WILL BOW...



...NOT TO
VIKRAMADITYA,
THE CHALUKYA...



... BUT TO ME,
KING OF THE
HOYSALAS!

SHANTALA BROKE HER SILENCE AND SPOKE OUT, BUT HER VOICE WAS LOW.

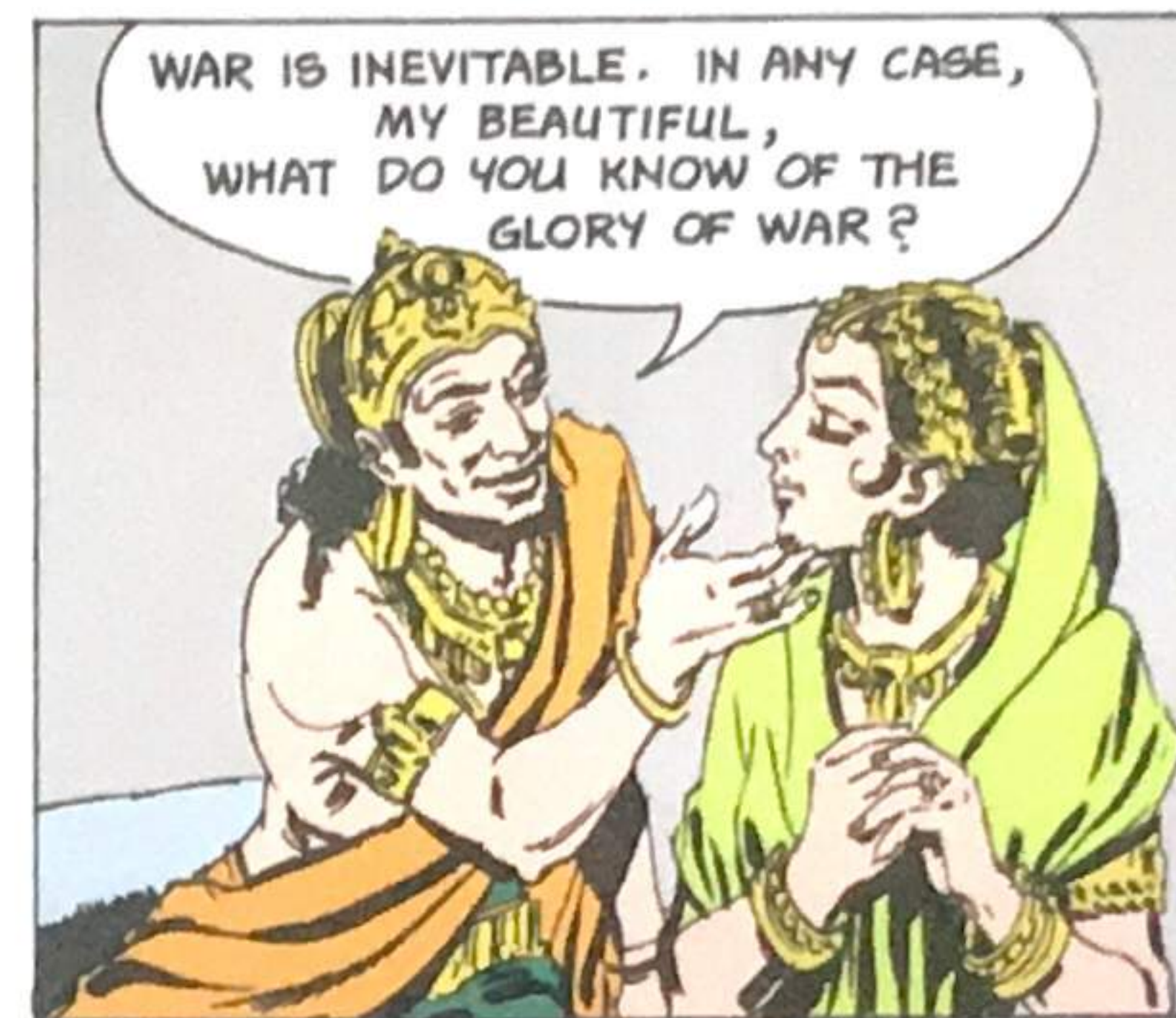
MY LORD, BALLU ANNA... THE HOYSALA PEOPLE... ALL... ALL SUFFERED BECAUSE OF WAR.



MUST WE HAVE WAR AGAIN?



WAR IS INEVITABLE. IN ANY CASE, MY BEAUTIFUL, WHAT DO YOU KNOW OF THE GLORY OF WAR?



ONLY THAT IT WOUNDS, MAIMS AND KILLS.



BESIDES, REMEMBER ANNA'S LAST COMMAND.

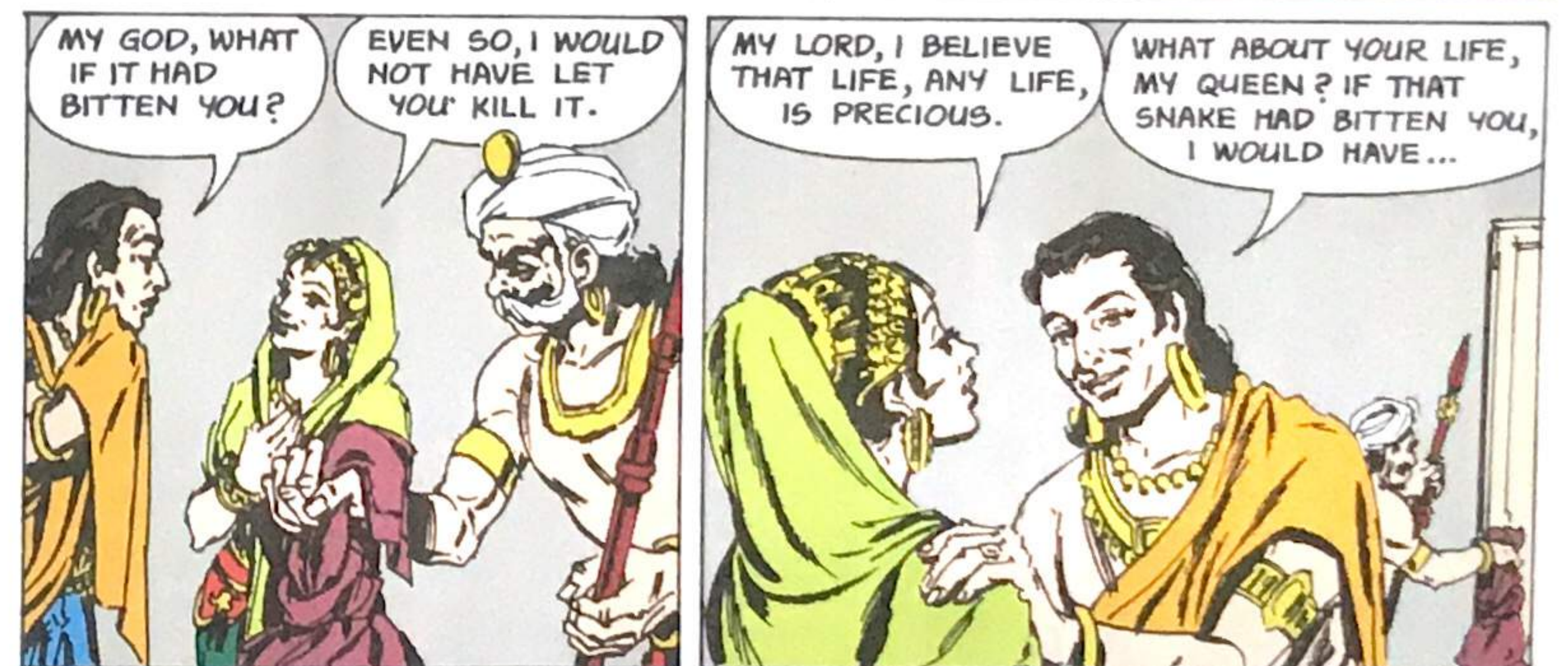
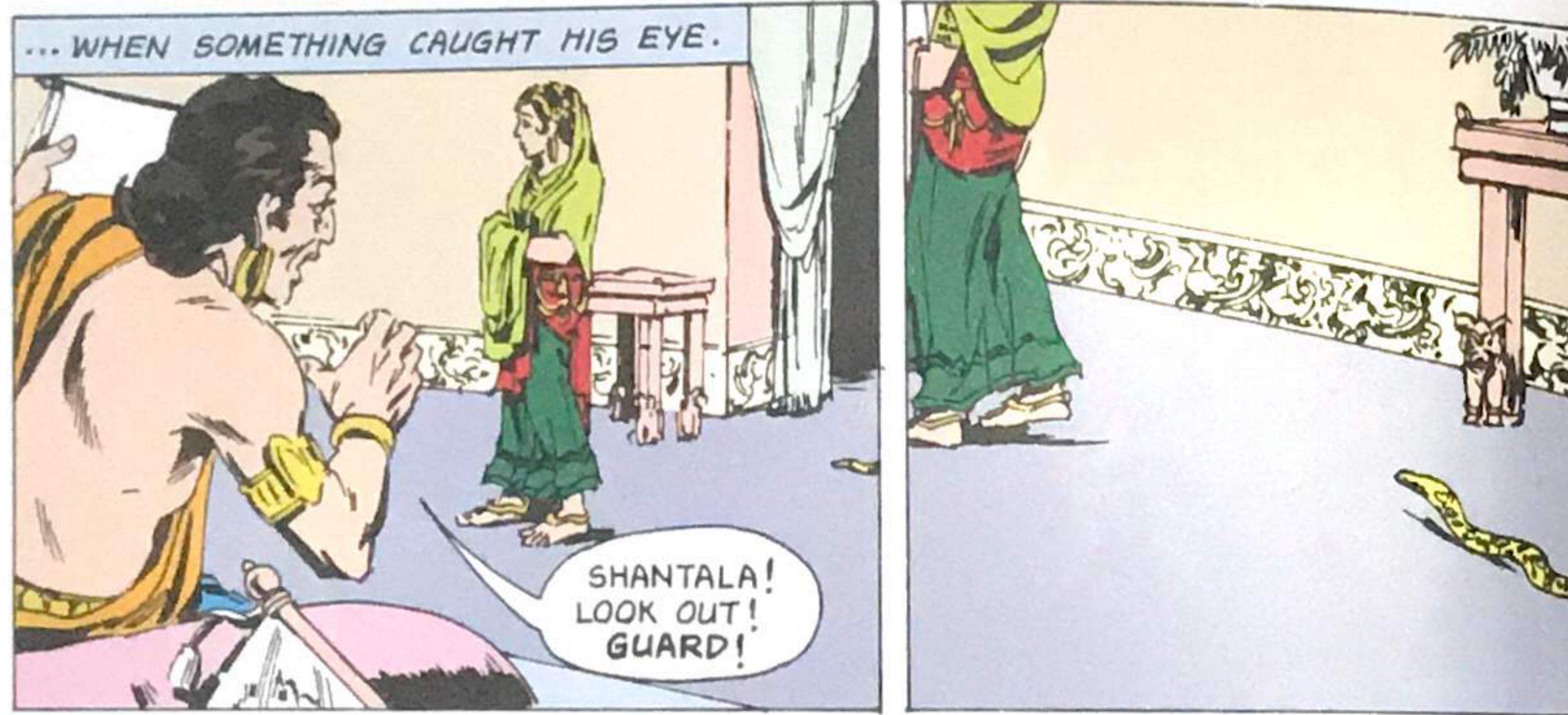


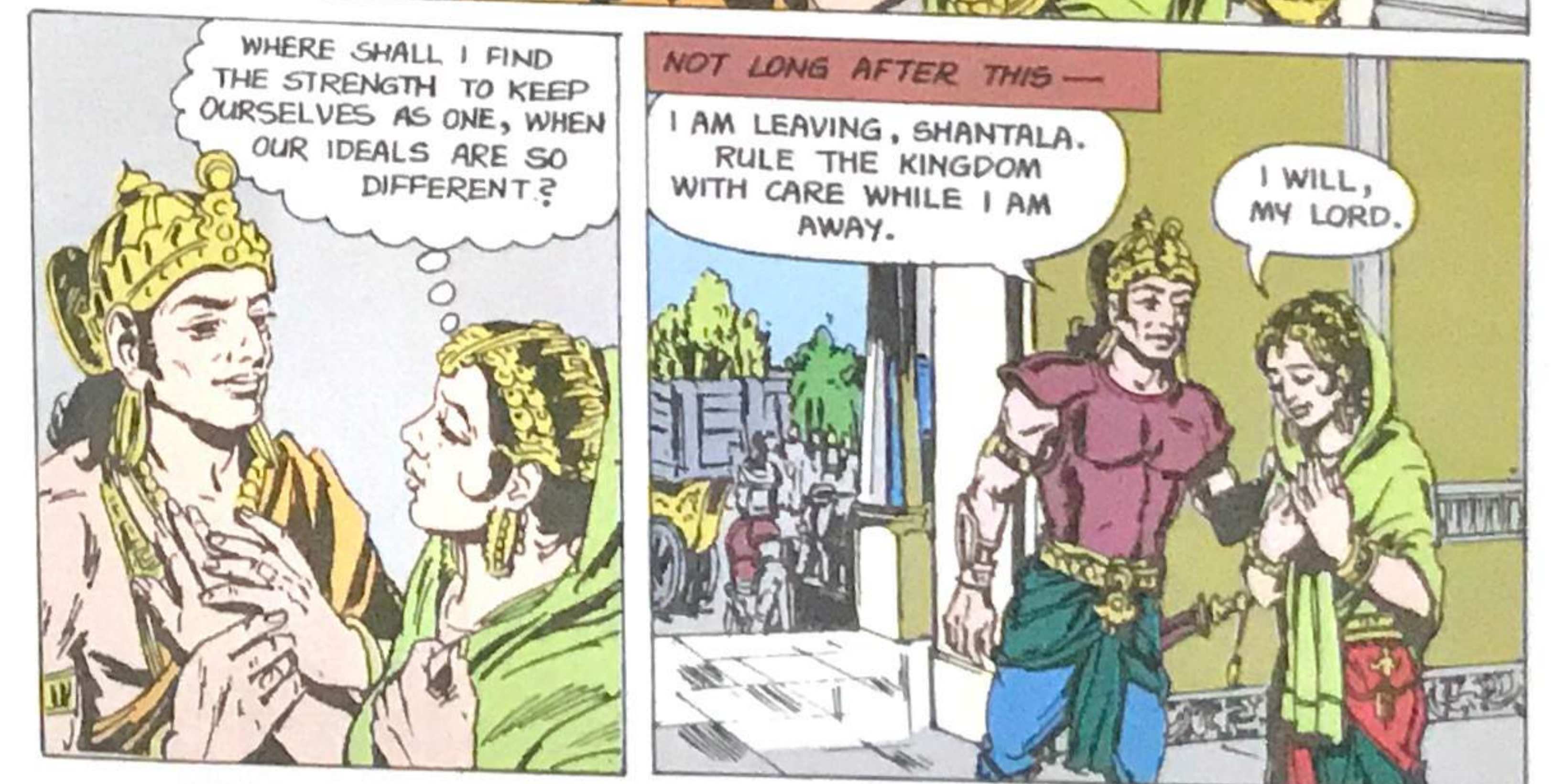
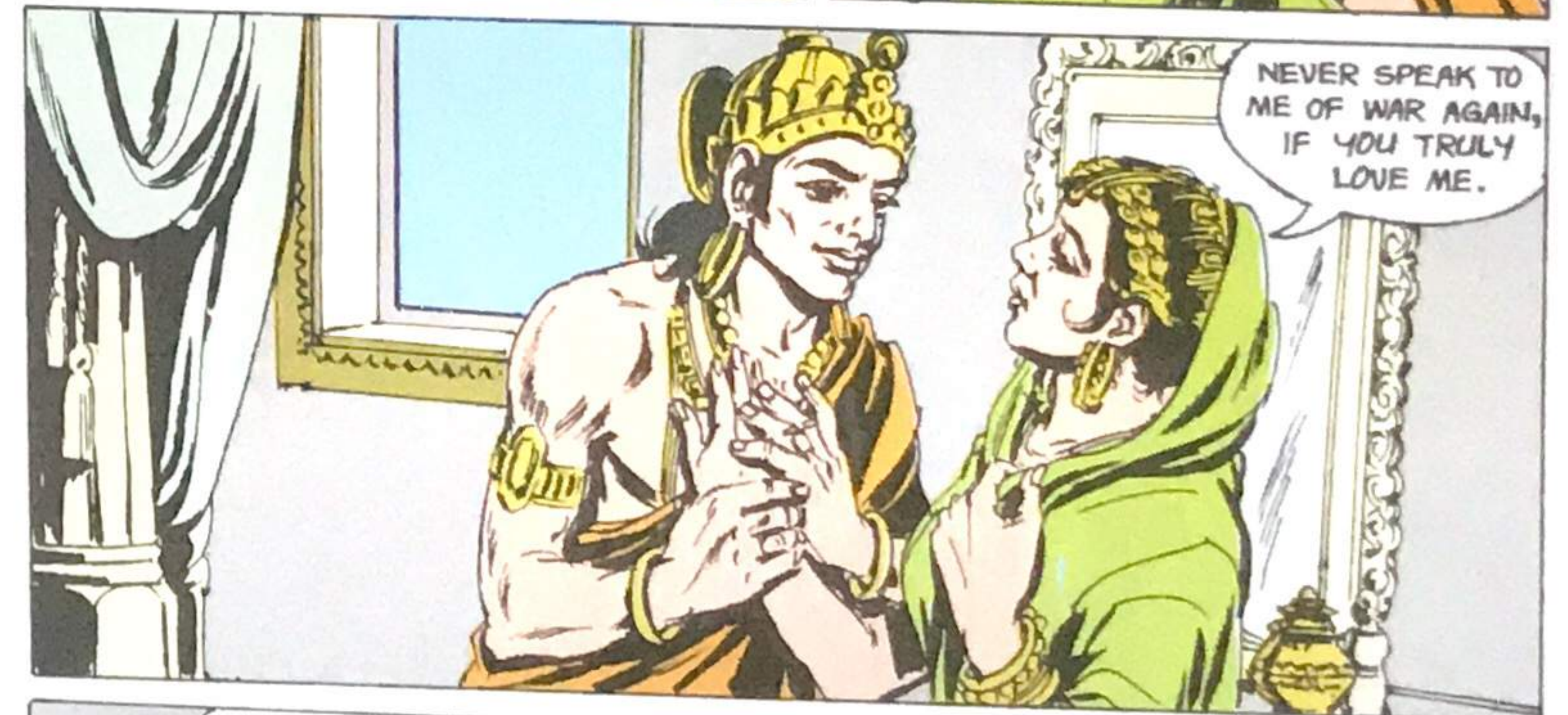
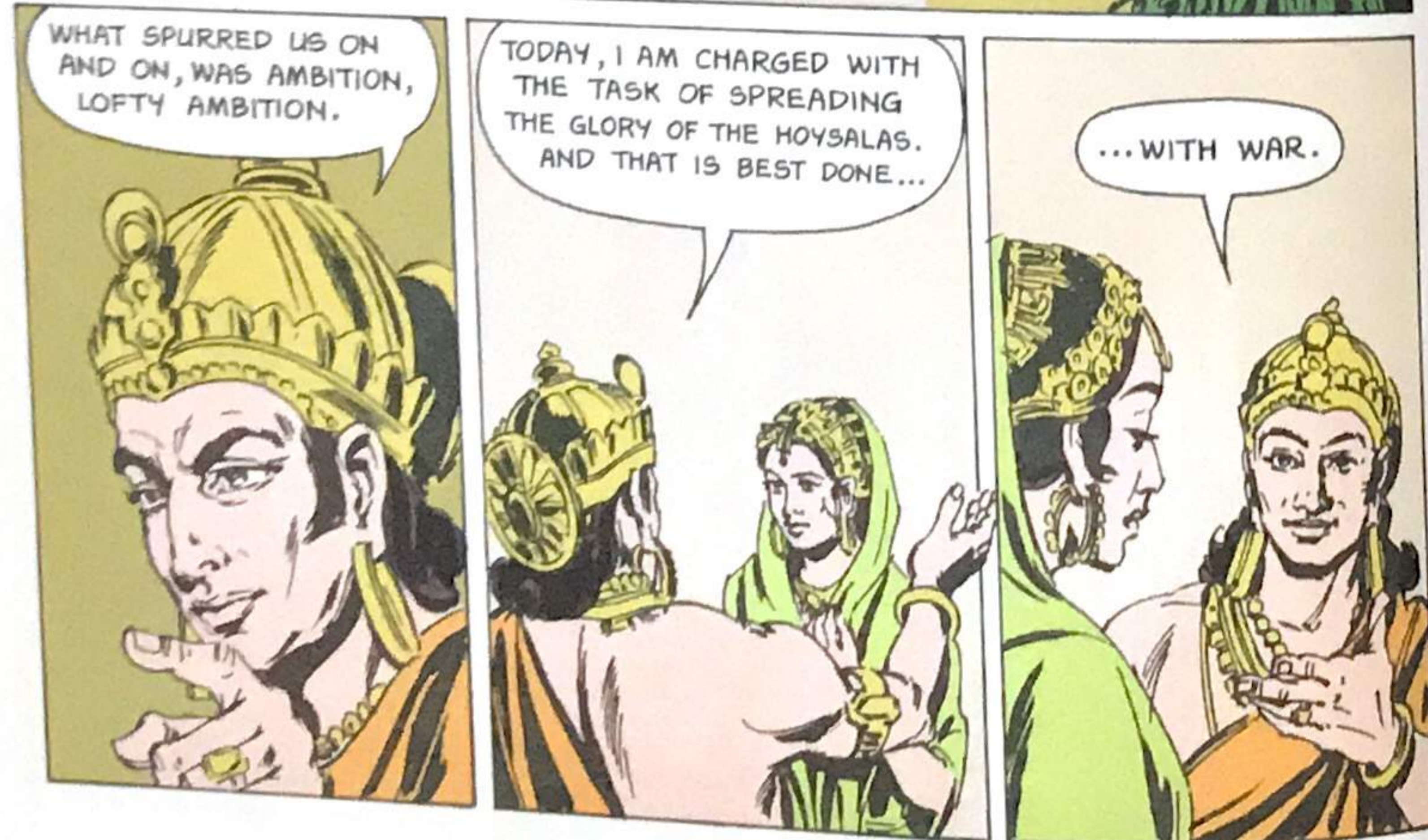
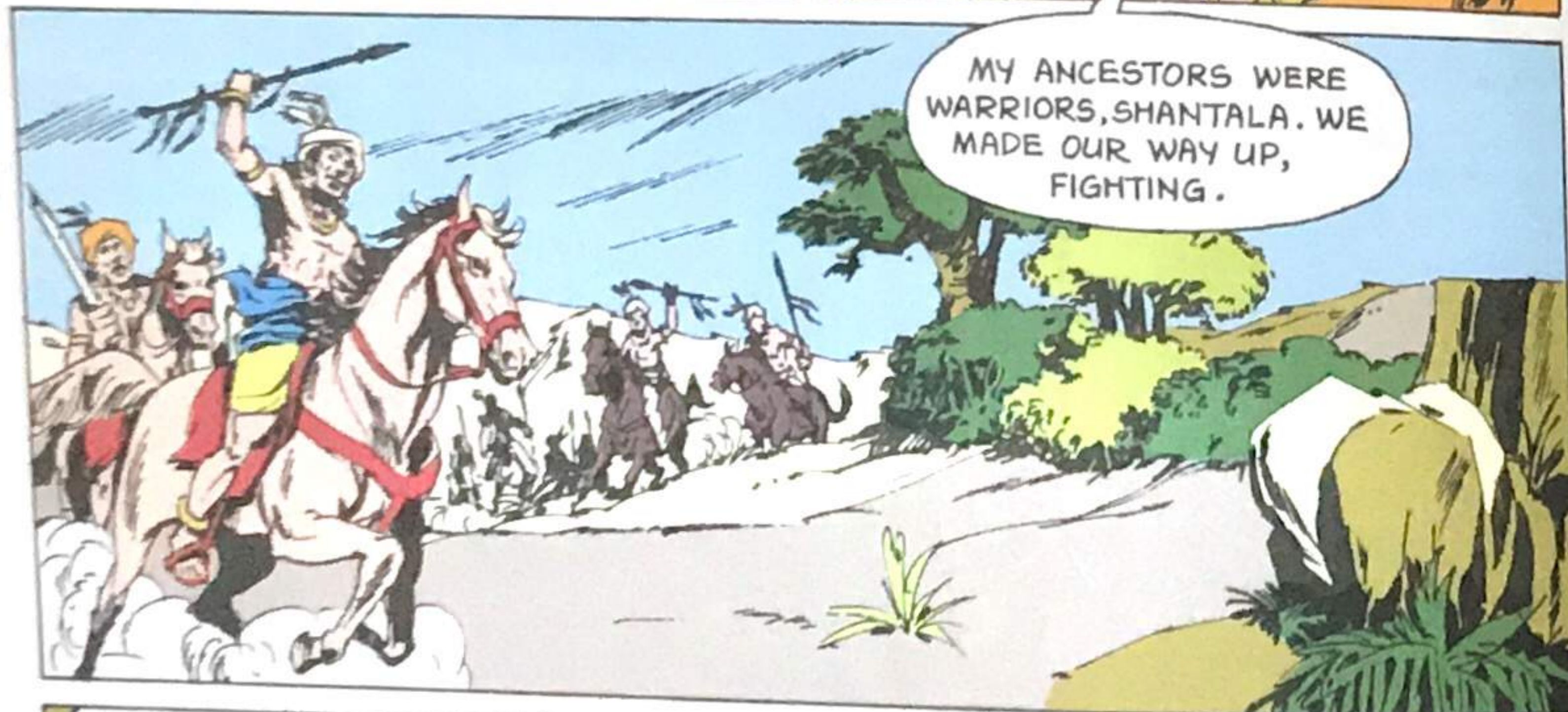
AND VISHNU VARDHANA RETIRED, LEAVING SHANTALA TO HER THOUGHTS.



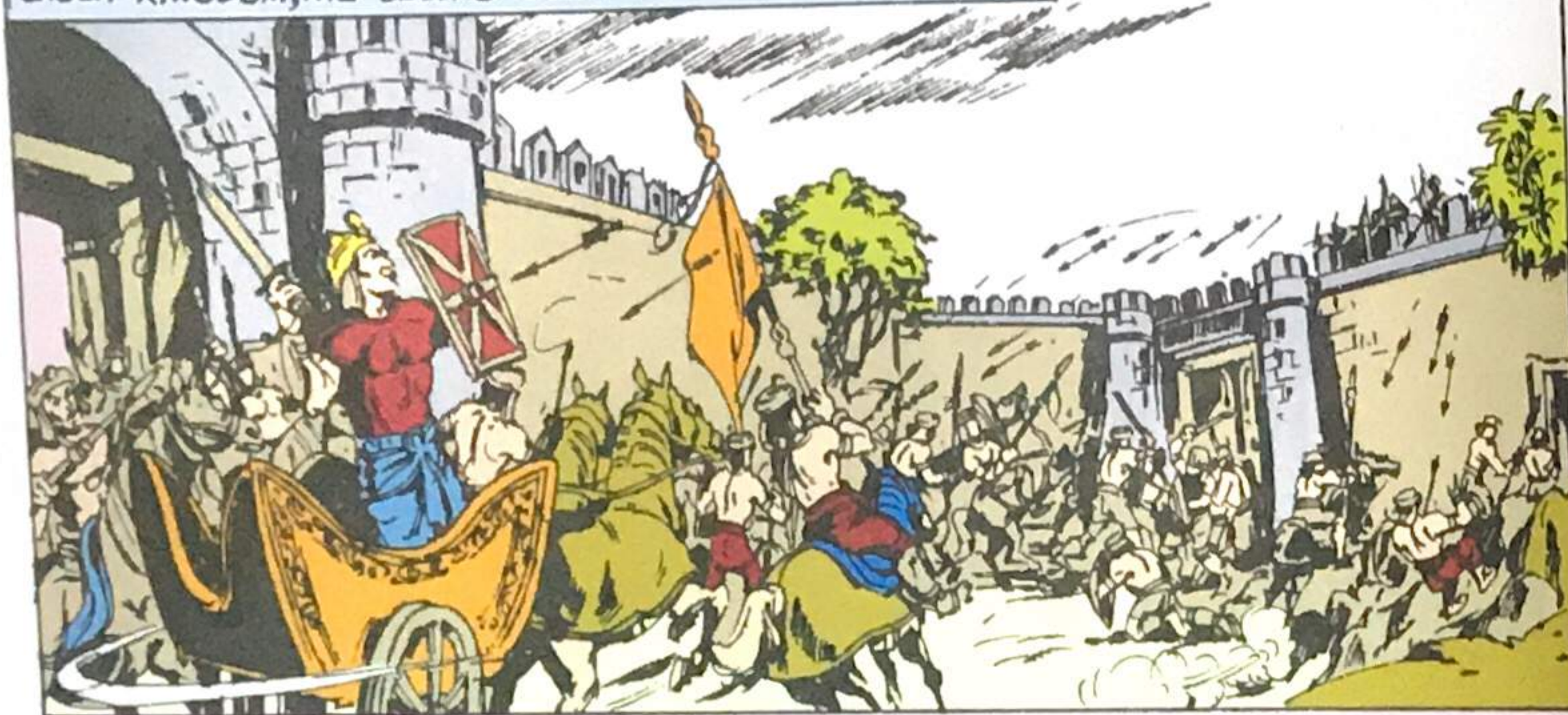
THE FOLLOWING MORNING VISHNU VARDHANA WAS BUSY STUDYING BATTLE PLANS DRAWN UP BY HIS GENERALS...







VISHNU VARDHANA, TO STRENGTHEN HIMSELF, BEGAN HIS CAMPAIGN BY ATTACKING THE CHOLA KINGDOM, THE SECOND GREATEST POWER OF THE DAY.



AFTER MUCH OF THE CHOLA TERRITORY HAD FALLEN INTO HOYSALA HANDS...

... VISHNU VARDHANA ATTACKED THE VASSALS OF THE CHALUKYAS.



IT WAS AN OUT AND OUT VICTORY FOR THE HOYSALA KING.



I NO LONGER BOW TO THE CHALUKYA OVERLORD. I AM A REBEL AND I REBEL FOR MY OWN INDEPENDENT STATE.

IN GLORIOUS TRIUMPH, THE KING RETURNED TO DORASAMUDRA.

MY QUEEN, WHAT A JOYOUS DAY THIS IS! ANNA'S DREAM — MY DREAM — HAS PARTLY BEEN FULFILLED.



NOW I AM READY TO TAKE TALAKADU — THE BASTION OF THE CHOLA EMPIRE.

SOON, THE DAY OF DEPARTURE DAWNED.



GOODBYE, MY QUEEN.

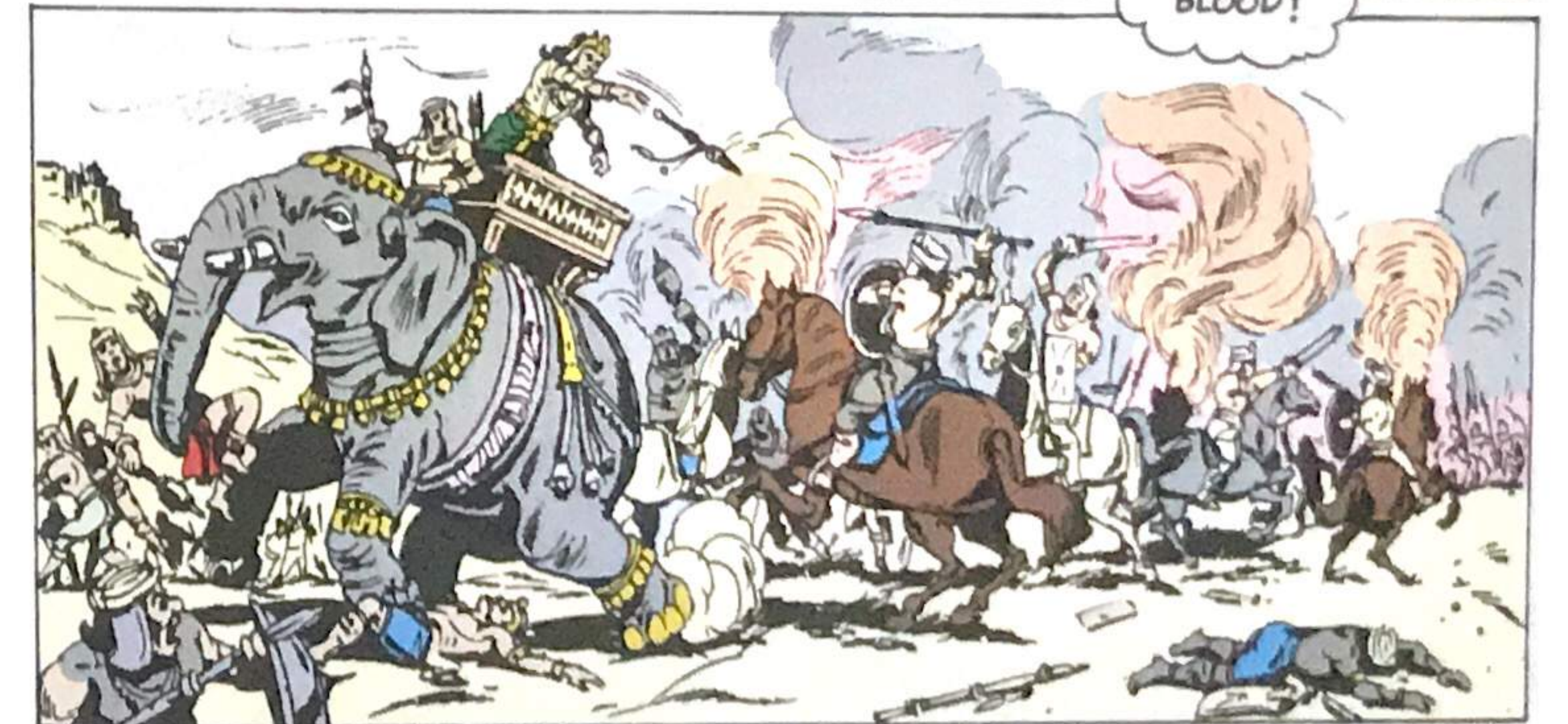
GOODBYE.



THIS MARK OF VERMILION THAT I APPLY TO YOUR FOREHEAD IS THE COLOUR OF VICTORY...



... AND BLOOD!



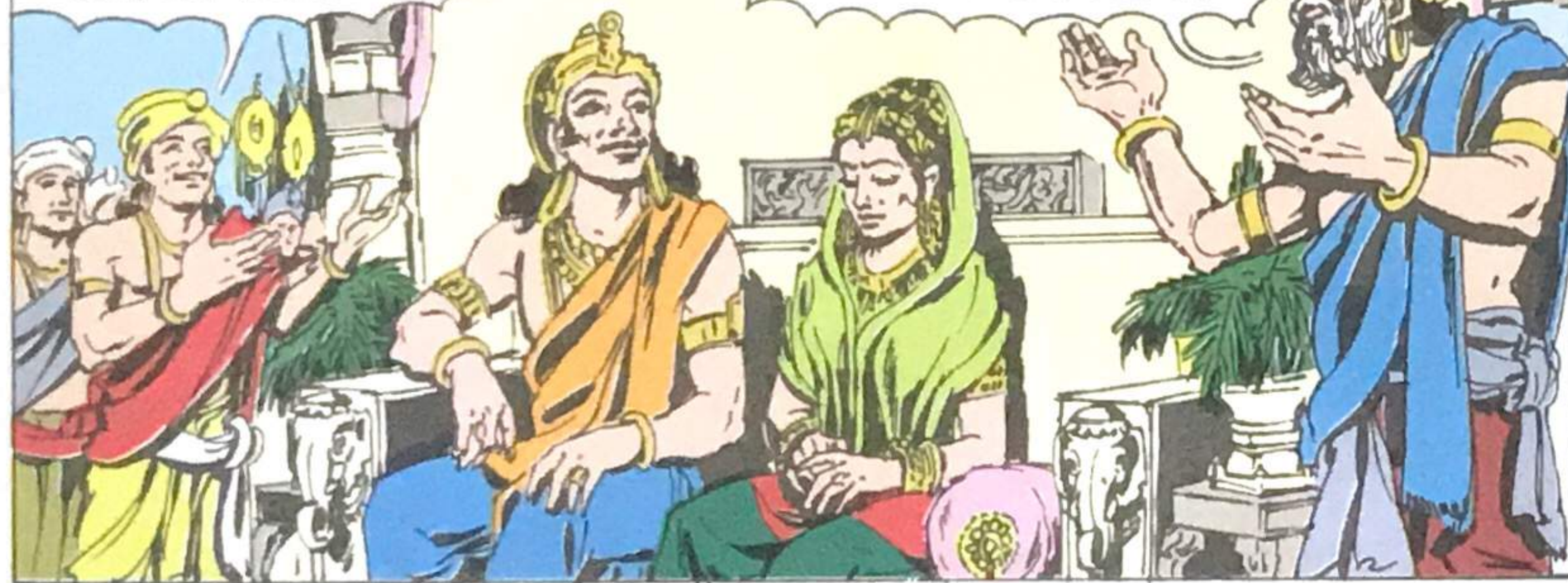
WHEN THE KING AND HIS ARMIES RETURNED SOME MONTHS LATER, THERE WERE FLOWERS AND ARCHES IN THE STREET TO WELCOME THEM.



AND IN THE PALACE HALL, POETS SANG HIS PRAISES.

GLORY TO THE MIGHTY-ARMED ONE WHOSE SWORD LIKE A ROYAL KITE DESTROYED SERPENT KINGS...

... WHO, LIKE A STRONG ELEPHANT, BROKE DOWN THE SPEARS OF THE ENEMY AS IF THEY WERE MERE PLANTAIN STEMS.



THE KAVERI WAS SO FULL OF ENEMY CORPSES THAT THE CHOLA KING COULD NOT DRINK ITS WATER, AND HAD TO TURN TO WELLS INSTEAD.



GREAT CONQUEROR, LIKE AN UNDERWATER FIRE YOU EVAPORATED THE OCEAN OF YOUR ENEMIES.

SHANTALA!



SHANTALA WAS RUNNING DOWN THE PASSAGE TO HER ROOM.



ONCE IN HER ROOM, SHE BROKE DOWN.

I CANNOT BEAR IT ANY LONGER.



THE NEXT MOMENT, THE DOOR OPENED AND THE KING ENTERED.

SHANTALA! WHY DID YOU LEAVE THE HALL SO SUDDENLY?

I...

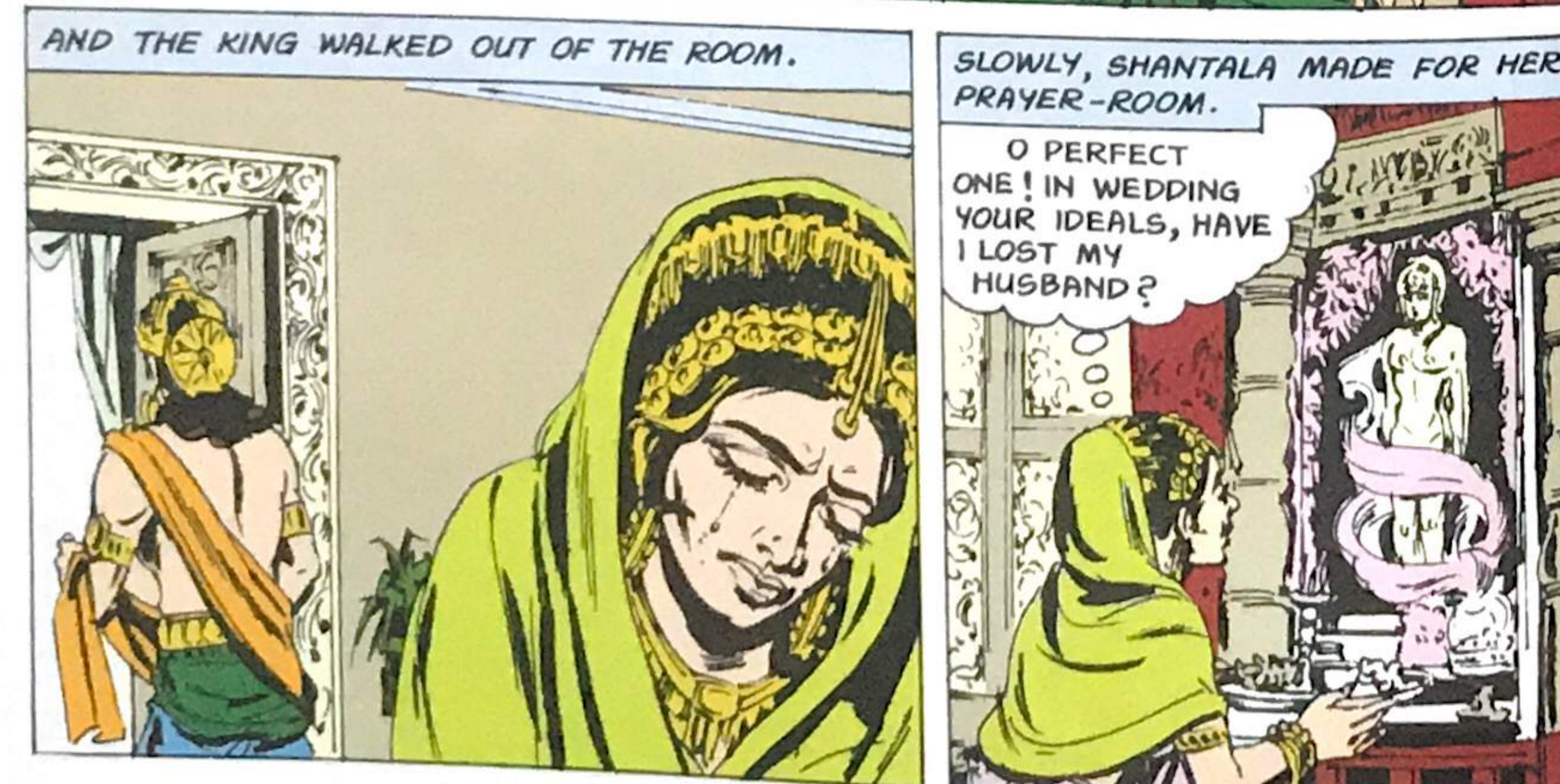
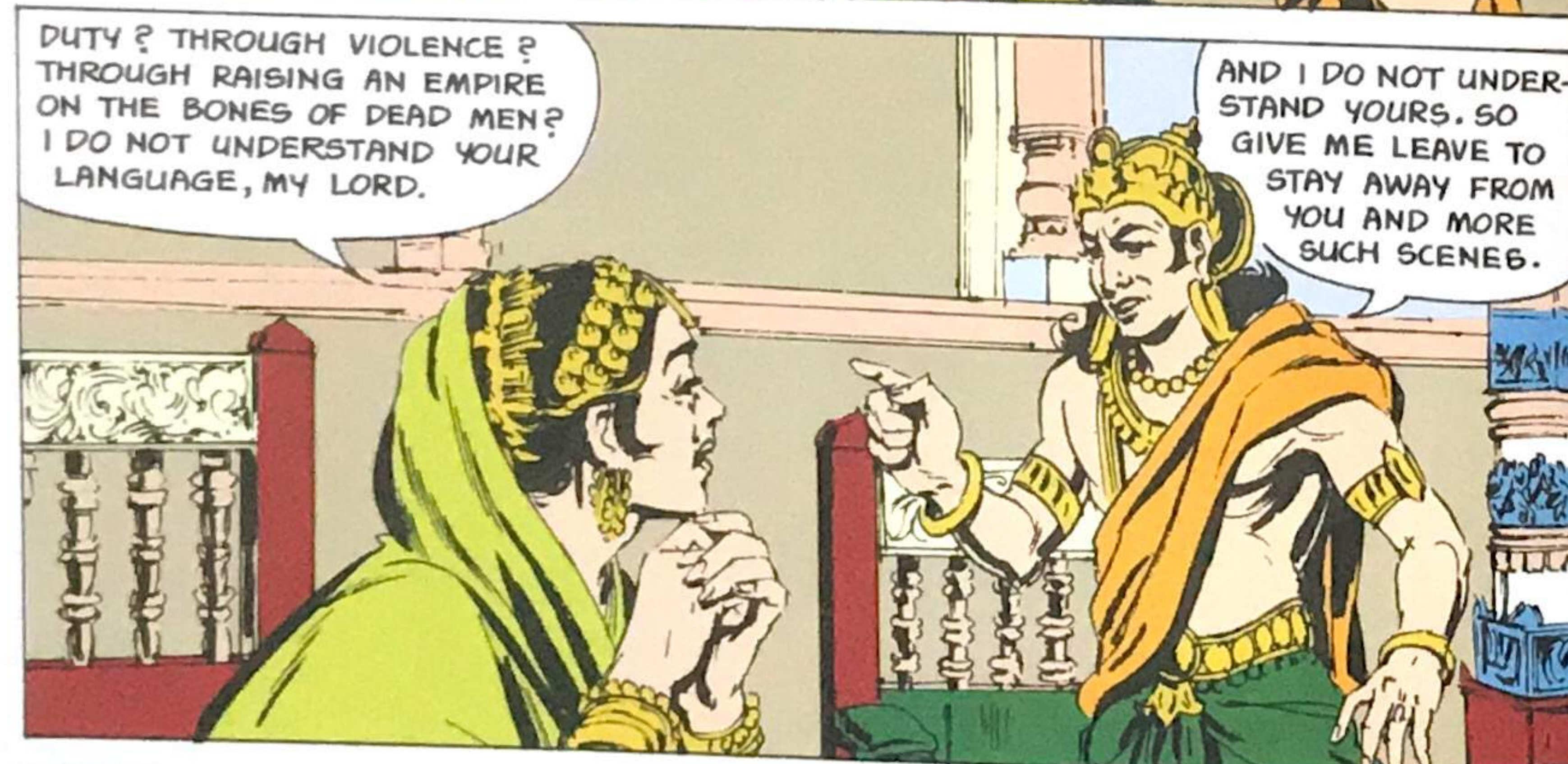
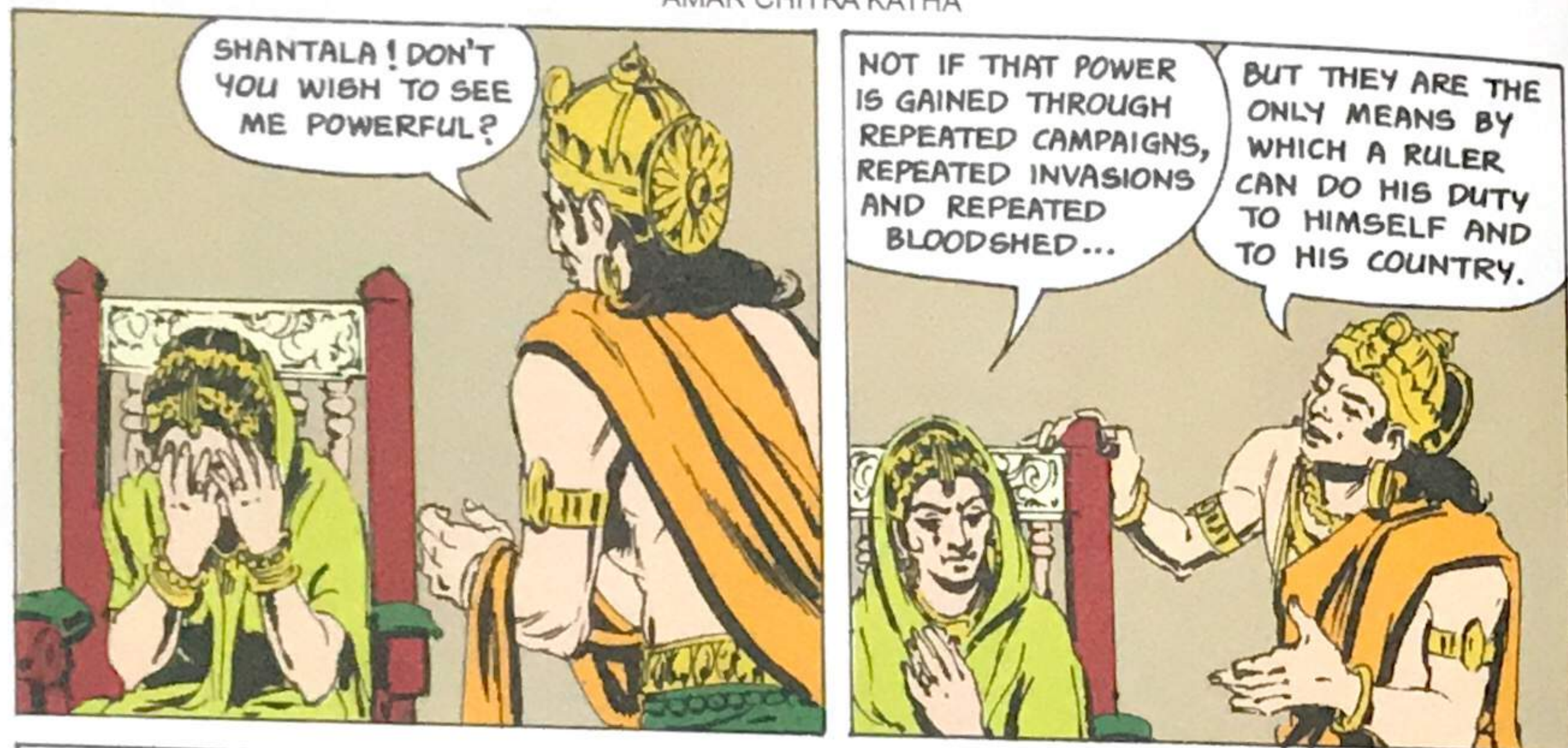


TEARS? TEARS ON THE DAY I RETURN HOME VICTORIOUS?



FORGIVE ME, MY LORD. TO HEAR OF YOU BURNING DOWN CITIES... FILLING RIVERS WITH CORPSES...





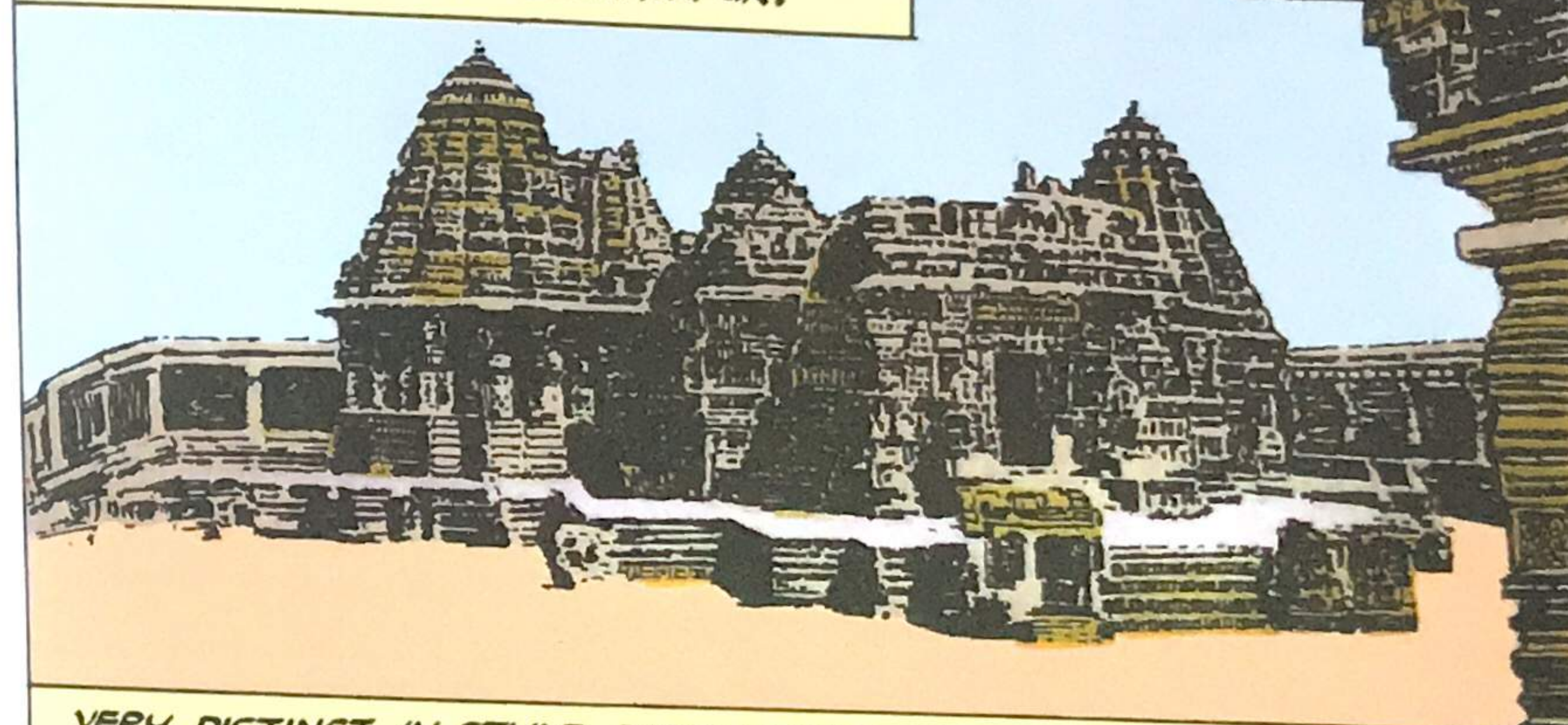
MARVELS IN STONE

Script : Swarn Khandpur

(Halebid, Belur and Somnathpur)

Illustrations : S. K. Parab

THE HOYSALAS WHO ROSE TO POWER IN KARNATAKA IN THE 12TH CENTURY A.D., ARE REMEMBERED TODAY FOR THEIR BEAUTIFUL TEMPLES AT HALEBID, BELUR AND SOMNATHPUR.



VERY DISTINCT IN STYLE, THESE TEMPLES ARE BUILT ON RAISED PLATFORMS AND DO NOT HAVE THE TALL GOPURAMS, SO TYPICAL OF SOUTH-INDIAN TEMPLES.

THE NAME "HOYSALA" HAS AN INTERESTING ORIGIN. 'HOY, SALA' (MEANING, STRIKE, SALA,) WERE THE WORDS SPOKEN TO SALA, A HUNTER, WHEN A HERMIT WAS THREATENED BY A TIGER. WHEN SALA KILLED THE TIGER, THE HERMIT BLESSED HIM WITH SOVEREIGNTY FOR SAVING HIS LIFE. SALA LATER FOUNDED A KINGDOM AND HIS HEROIC ACT BECAME THE EMBLEM OF THE DYNASTY.





THE HOYSALA TEMPLES ARE HIGHLY DECORATIVE. THEY HAVE ELABORATE CARVED FRIEZES RUNNING ROUND THEIR WALLS. THE FRIEZE REPRODUCED HERE DEPICTS A SCENE FROM THE PANCHATANTRA STORY OF THE TURTLE WHO FELL OFF THE STICK. THESE HIGHLY CHISELLED FRIEZES ARE INTERSPERSED WITH LARGER FIGURES OF DANCERS, MUSICIANS AND HUNTERS. IN THE KESAVA TEMPLE (SOMNATHPUR) EVEN GANESHA IS SHOWN DANCING.



SUPPORTING THE EAVES OF THE TEMPLES ARE ORNATE FIGURES IN GRACEFUL POSES.



THE INTERIORS OF THESE TEMPLES ARE AS ORNATE AS THEIR EXTERIORS WITH FINELY CARVED PILLARS. AND THIS NANDI, VAHAN* OF SHIVA, SEEMS TO HAVE RECEIVED SPECIAL ATTENTION FROM THE SCULPTOR.

*VEHICLE

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SHANTALA

SOME TIME LATER, VISHNU VARDHANA SET OUT ON ANOTHER CAMPAIGN. HE DID NOT TAKE LEAVE OF SHANTALA.



BUT LATER, THE SAME DAY —

PATTAMAHADEVI, THE CARRIAGE IS WAITING FOR YOU.

THE CARRIAGE?



THE KING LEFT SPECIAL INSTRUCTIONS THAT YOU MUST BE THE FIRST TO ENTER THE SITE.

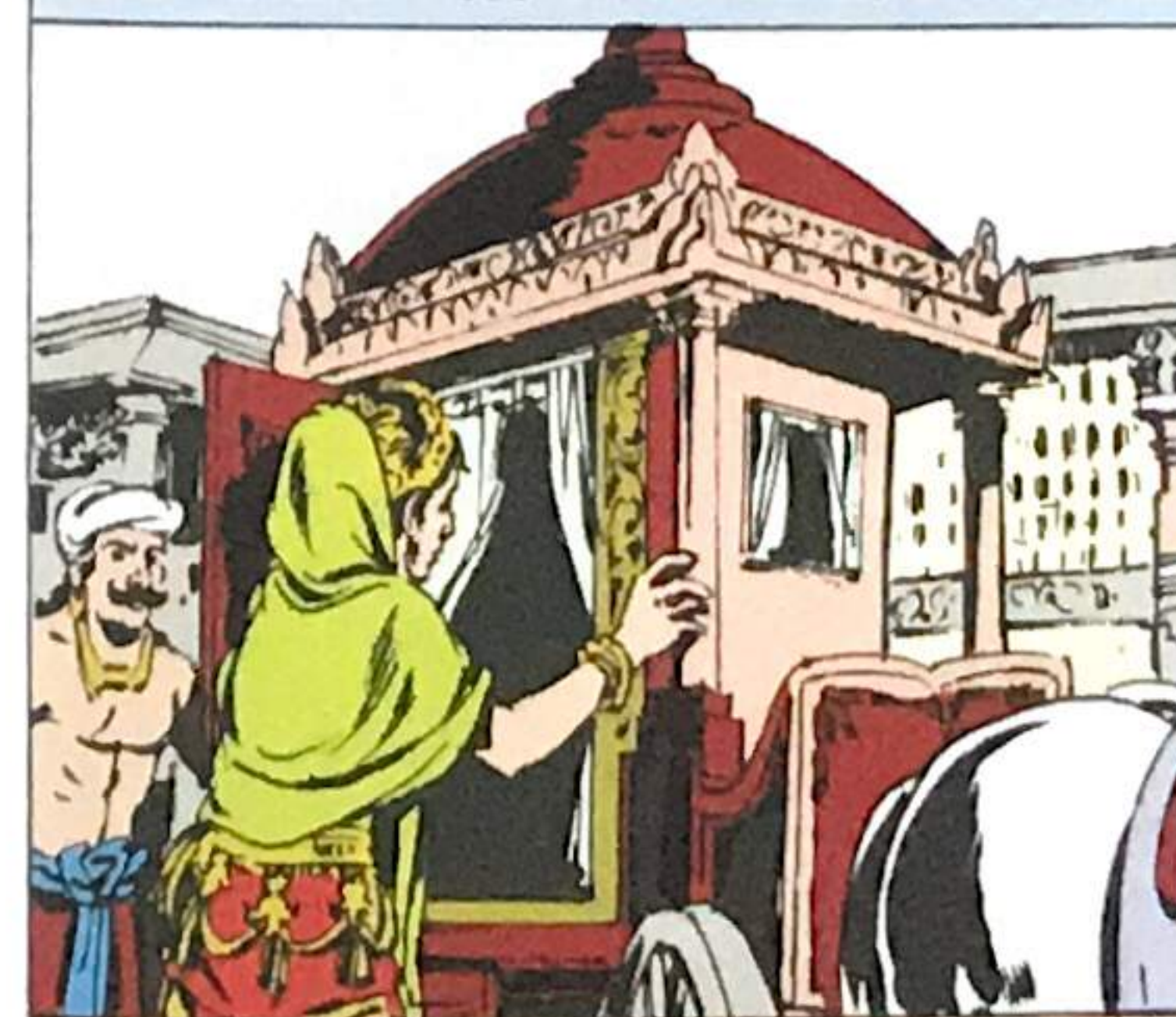
I DON'T UNDERSTAND.



IF YOU WILL DO ME THE HONOUR OF FOLLOWING ME....

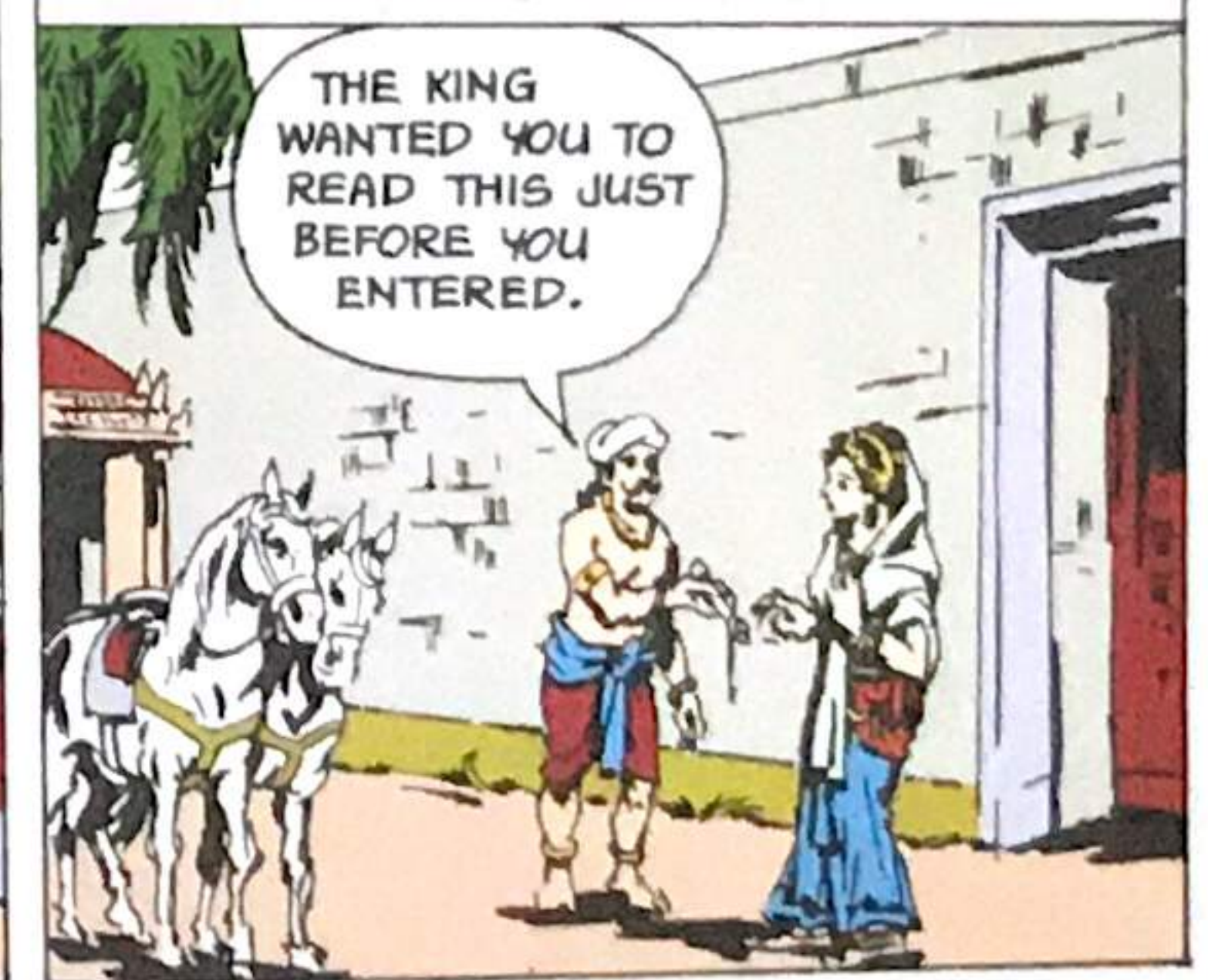


SO SHANTALA GOT INTO THE CARRIAGE...



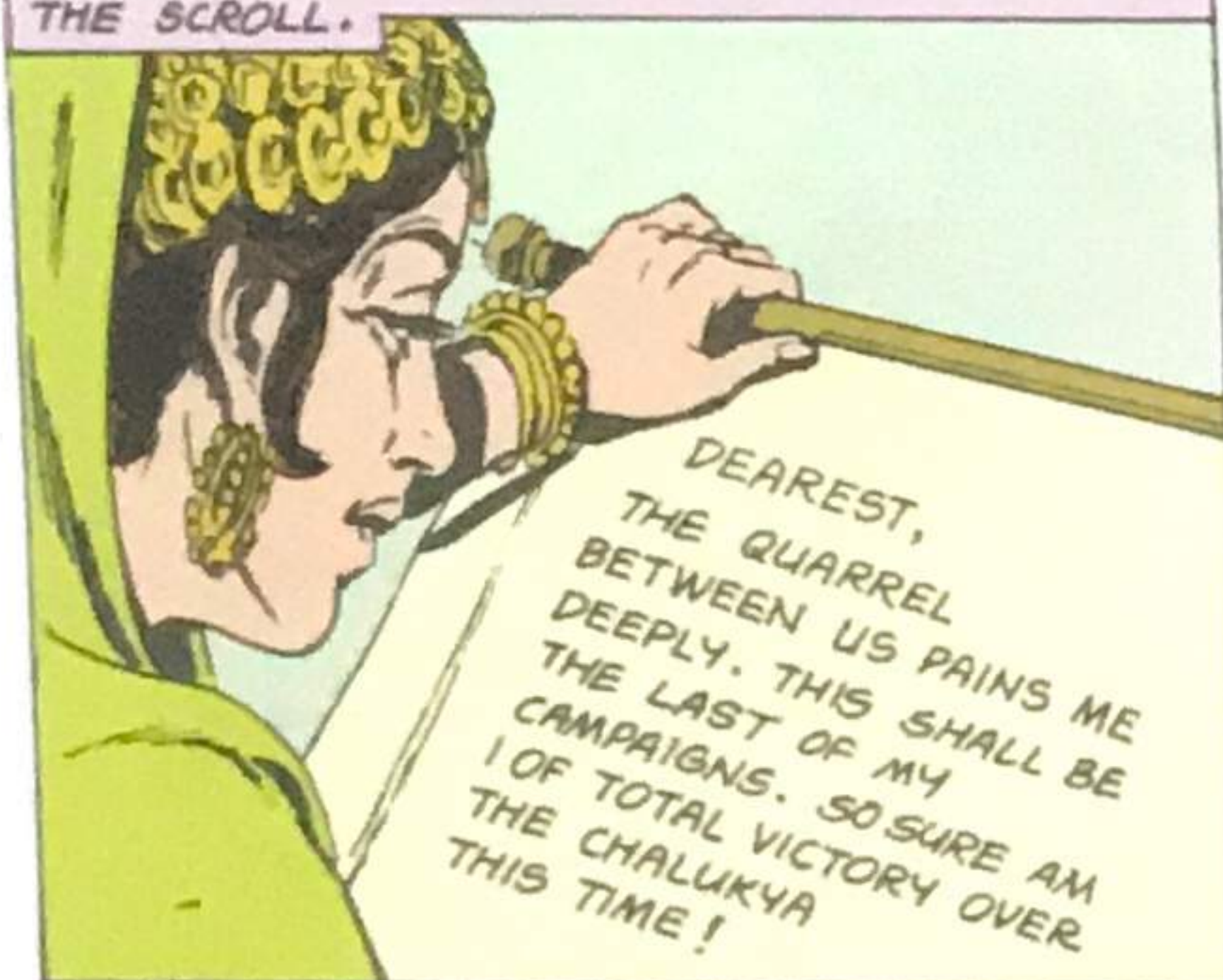
...AND RODE AWAY WITH THE ATTENDANT.

THEY GOT OFF OUTSIDE A PIECE OF LAND, ENCLOSED BY A WALL. THE ATTENDANT HANDED SHANTALA A SCROLL.

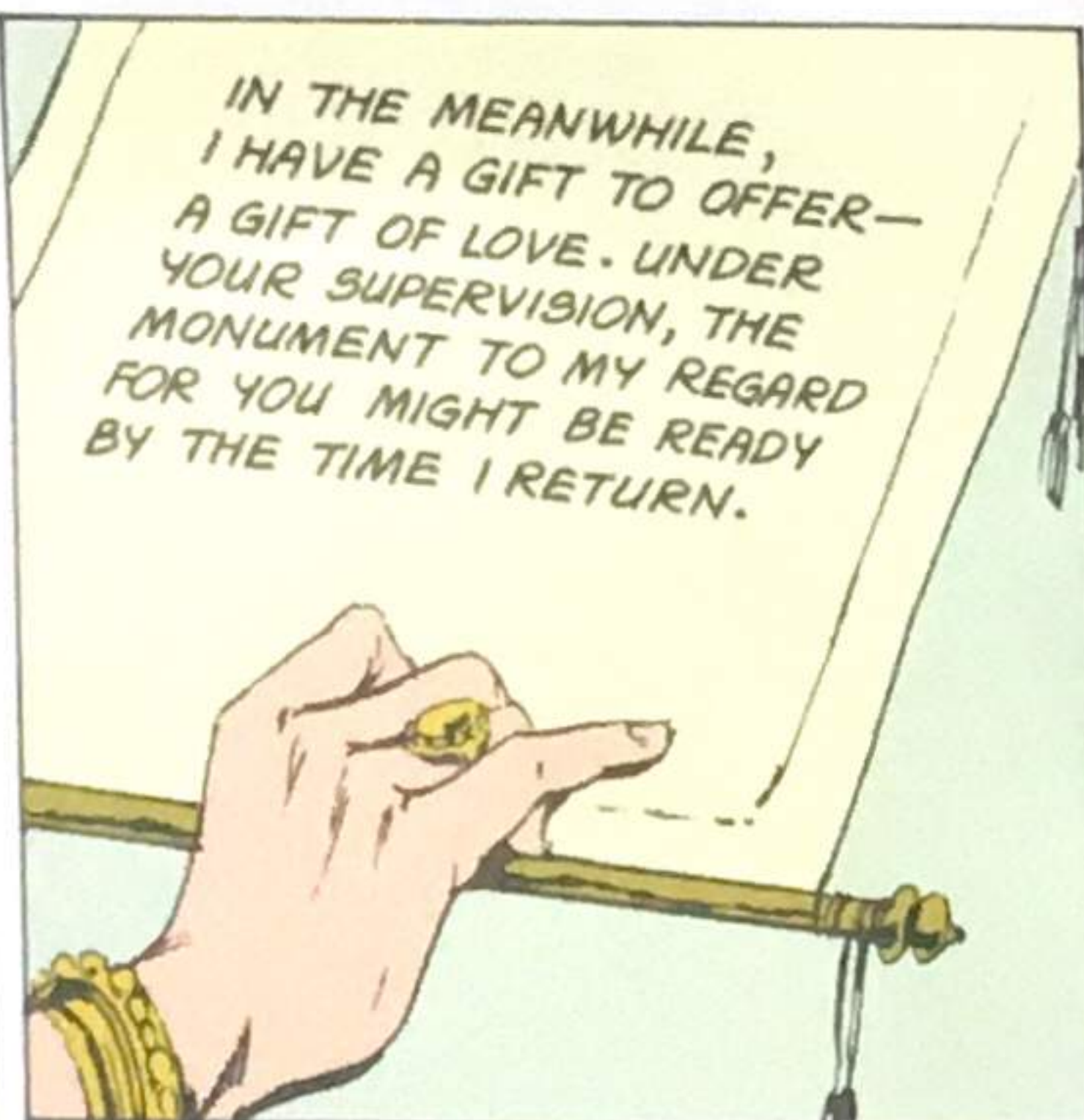


THE KING WANTED YOU TO READ THIS JUST BEFORE YOU ENTERED.

SHANTALA BROKE THE SEAL AND UNFURLED THE SCROLL.



IN THE MEANWHILE,
I HAVE A GIFT TO OFFER—
A GIFT OF LOVE. UNDER
YOUR SUPERVISION, THE
MONUMENT TO MY REGARD
FOR YOU MIGHT BE READY
BY THE TIME I RETURN.



THIS IS THE FOUNDATION OF THE VIJAYA NARAYANA TEMPLE*. IT IS THE LARGEST OF THE SEVERAL TEMPLE PROJECTS ON HAND TO COMMEMORATE THE KING'S VICTORIES.



TO COMMEMORATE MY VICTORY
TOO, MY LORD. THE VICTORY OF
OUR UNION... OUR LOVE. YOU
COULD NOT HAVE GIVEN ME
A GREATER GIFT THAN
YOUR PROMISE AND
THIS TEMPLE.



AT ONCE, SHANTALA PLUNGED INTO THE DELIGHTS OF WATCHING A TEMPLE GROW. SHE WENT ALMOST DAILY TO THE SITES OF THE VIJAYA NARAYANA AND THE OTHER SHRINES THAT WERE COMING UP. AND OFTEN HER STEP-SON, BALLALA, JOINED HER.



* THE MODERN CHENNA KESHA TEMPLE AT BELURU;
ONE OF THE FINEST EXTANT EXAMPLES OF HOYSALA ARCHITECTURE

SHANTALA AND BALLALA FOUND THAT PROGRESS ON THE WORK WAS SLOW AS GOOD SCULPTORS WERE HARD TO COME BY.

BALLALA, WHY DON'T WE SEND FOR DASOJA? HE IS A TALENTED SCULPTOR. HE LIVES AT BALIPURA, WHERE I WAS BORN. HE WILL BE MOST HAPPY TO COME AND WORK HERE.



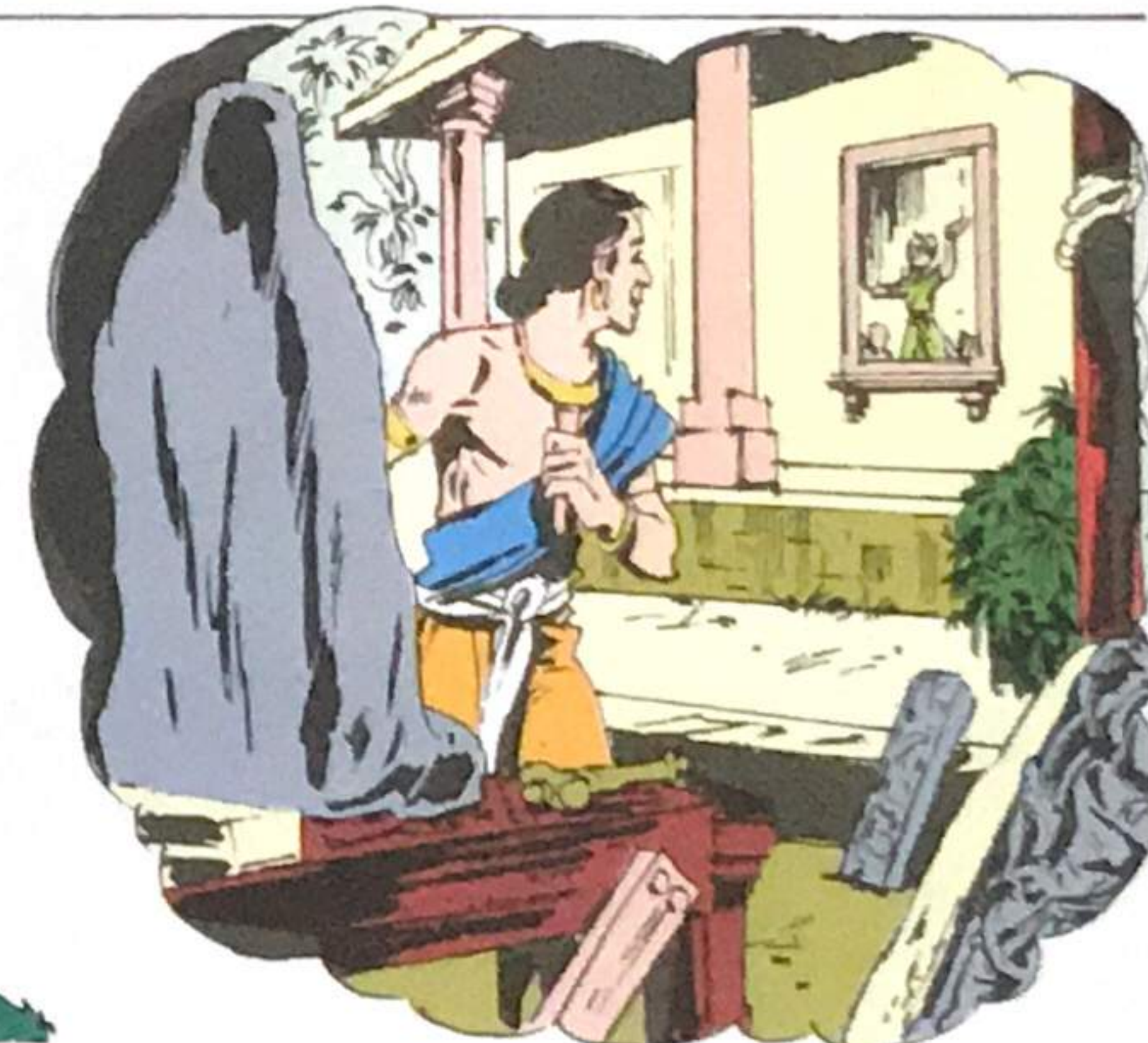
AND SURE ENOUGH DASOJA CAME.

I AM HERE TO DO YOUR BIDDING, PATTAMAHADEVI.

PLEASE DO NOT BE FORMAL WITH ME. SEE ME AS THE SAME SHANTALA YOU USED TO KNOW.



YES, SHANTALA. I REMEMBER THE FIRST TIME I SAW YOU...



I WAS DETERMINED TO BRING THE VIBRANT RHYTHM OF YOUR ART...



...INTO MINE.





WHILE SHANTALA WAS THUS ENGAGED AT HOME, BUILDING TEMPLES, TANKS AND PILGRIM SHELTERS...



... VISHNU VARDHANA, FAR AWAY, WAS WARRING WITH THE EMPEROR AND TWELVE OF HIS SUBORDINATES. AND IN THE GREAT STRUGGLE THAT TOOK PLACE AT KANNEGALA, ONCE AGAIN, VISHNU VARDHANA WON.



TASTING SUCCESS AFTER SUCCESS, THE HOYSALA KING DID NOT KNOW WHERE TO STOP. WAR BECAME AN OBSESSION WITH HIM.

FINALLY, A DESPERATE VIKRAMADITYA THREW ALL HIS MIGHT INTO CRUSHING THE INSOLENT HOYSALA.

VISHNU VARDHANA HAS GONE TOO FAR. MY HONOUR DEPENDS ON THIS BATTLE. GET HIM; GET HIM—SOMEHOW!



HE RETURNED TO HIS CAPITAL, LIKE HIS BROTHER, DEJECTED AND ILL FROM DEFEAT. BUT SHANTALA NURSED HIM GENTLY BACK TO HEALTH.



SHANTALA COULD NOT CONTAIN HER JOY AND THE KING WATCHED HER HAPPY FACE WITH PLEASURE.



MY DEAR LORD HAS SEEN THE LIGHT. I ASK FOR NOTHING MORE FROM LIFE.

MY LORD, WHEN YOU ARE ABLE TO WALK, WE WILL GO TO OUR TEMPLE. THERE IS A SCULPTURE BY DASOJA THAT I MUST SHOW YOU.



WE WILL CERTAINLY GO.

WHEN HE HAD FULLY RECOVERED...



...WITH HIS QUEEN BY HIS SIDE, VISHNU VARDHANA GAVE GRANTS TO JAINA, VAISHNAVA AND SHAIVA TEMPLES.



SOON, SHANTALA TOOK HIM TO THE TEMPLE AS PLANNED.



MY LORD, IS NOT A TEMPLE MAN'S GREATEST CREATION?

ER... SHANTALA...



WHAT IS IT, MY LORD? ARE YOU ALL RIGHT?

SHANTALA, THERE IS SOMETHING I MUST TELL YOU.

THE KING DREW A DEEP BREATH.

I HAD PROMISED YOU THAT THERE WOULD BE NO MORE CAMPAIGNS. BUT...



...MY QUEEN, I LOST THAT WAR WHEN I WAS SO SURE OF VICTORY. I WANT ANOTHER CHANCE.

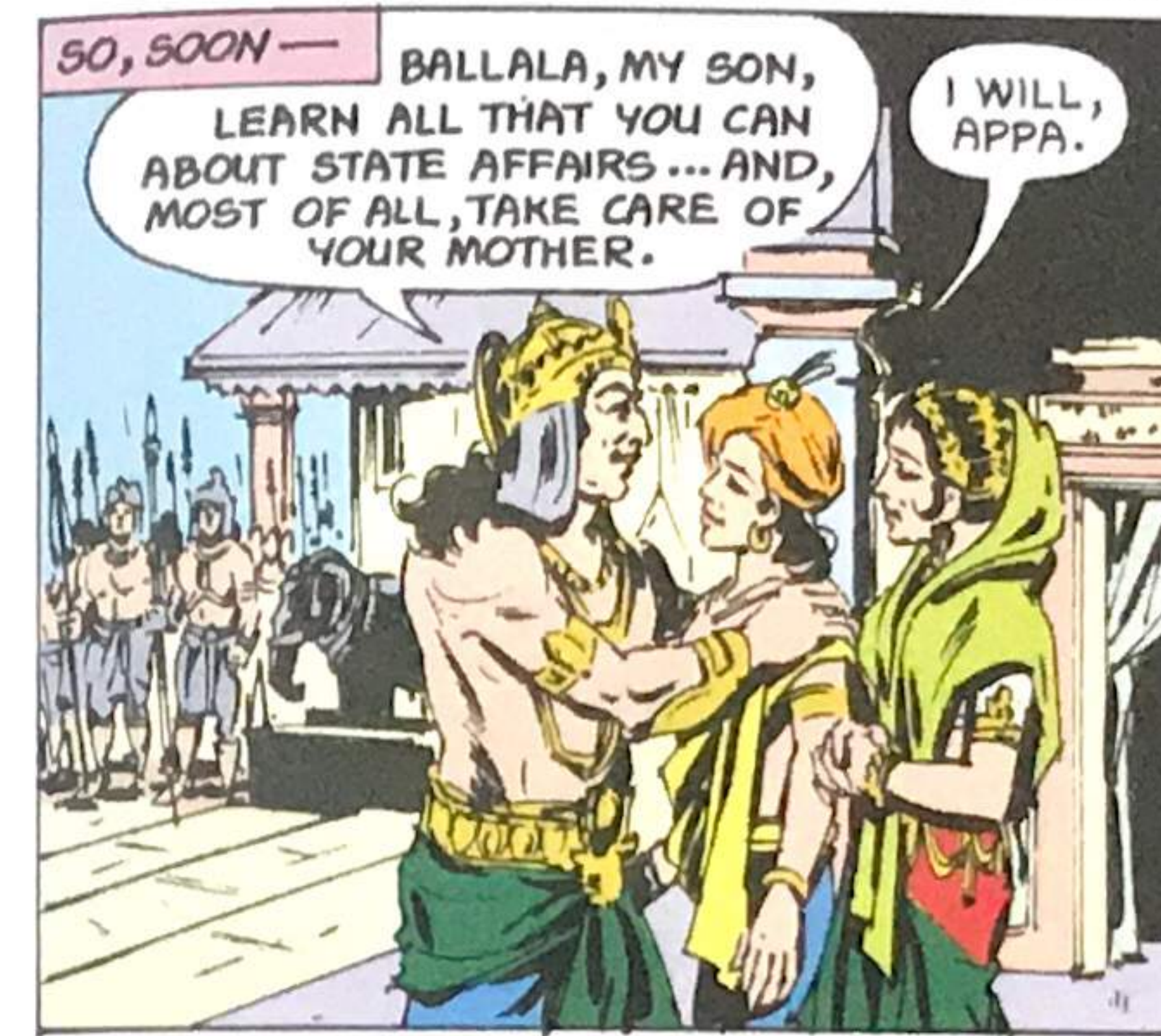
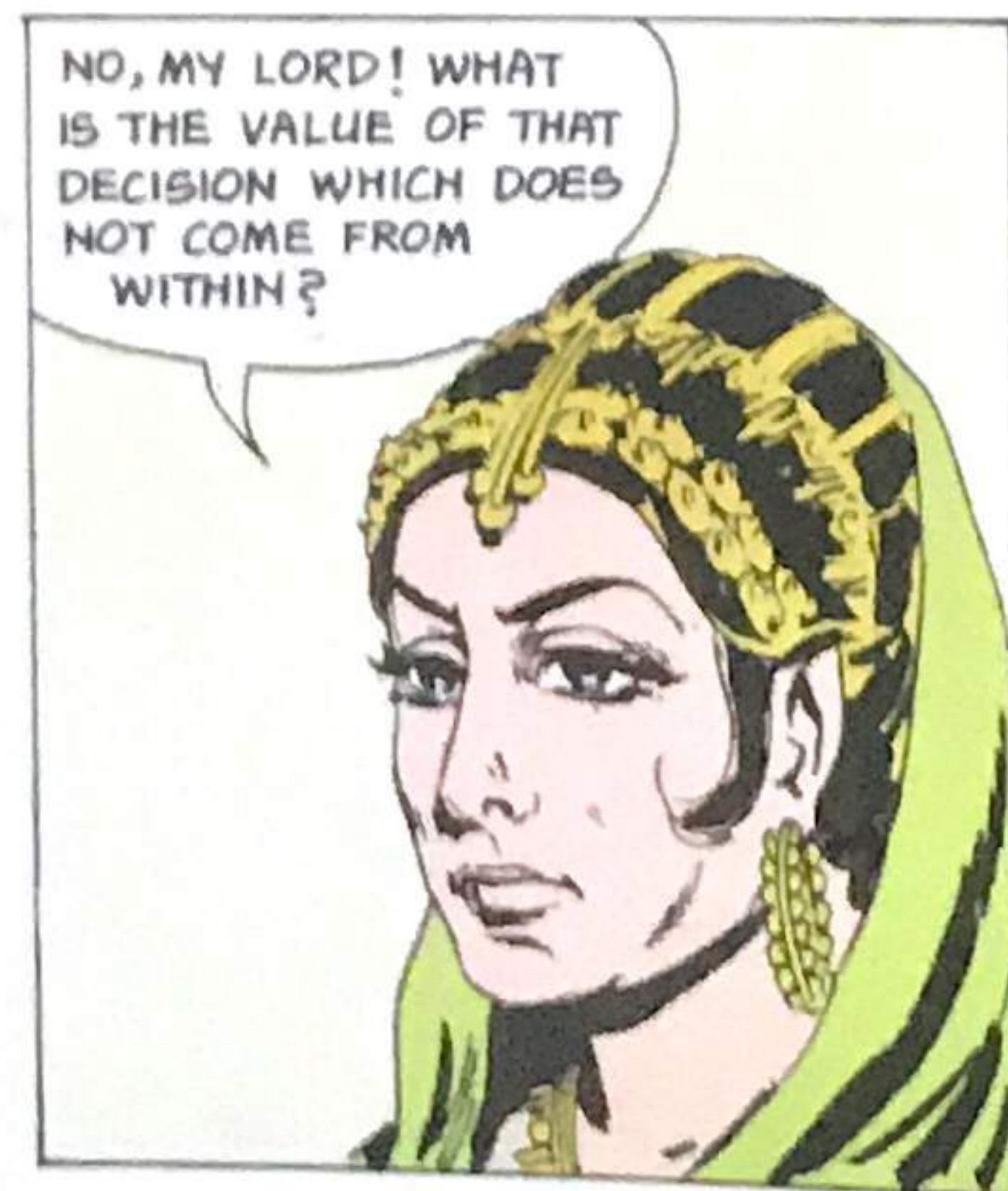
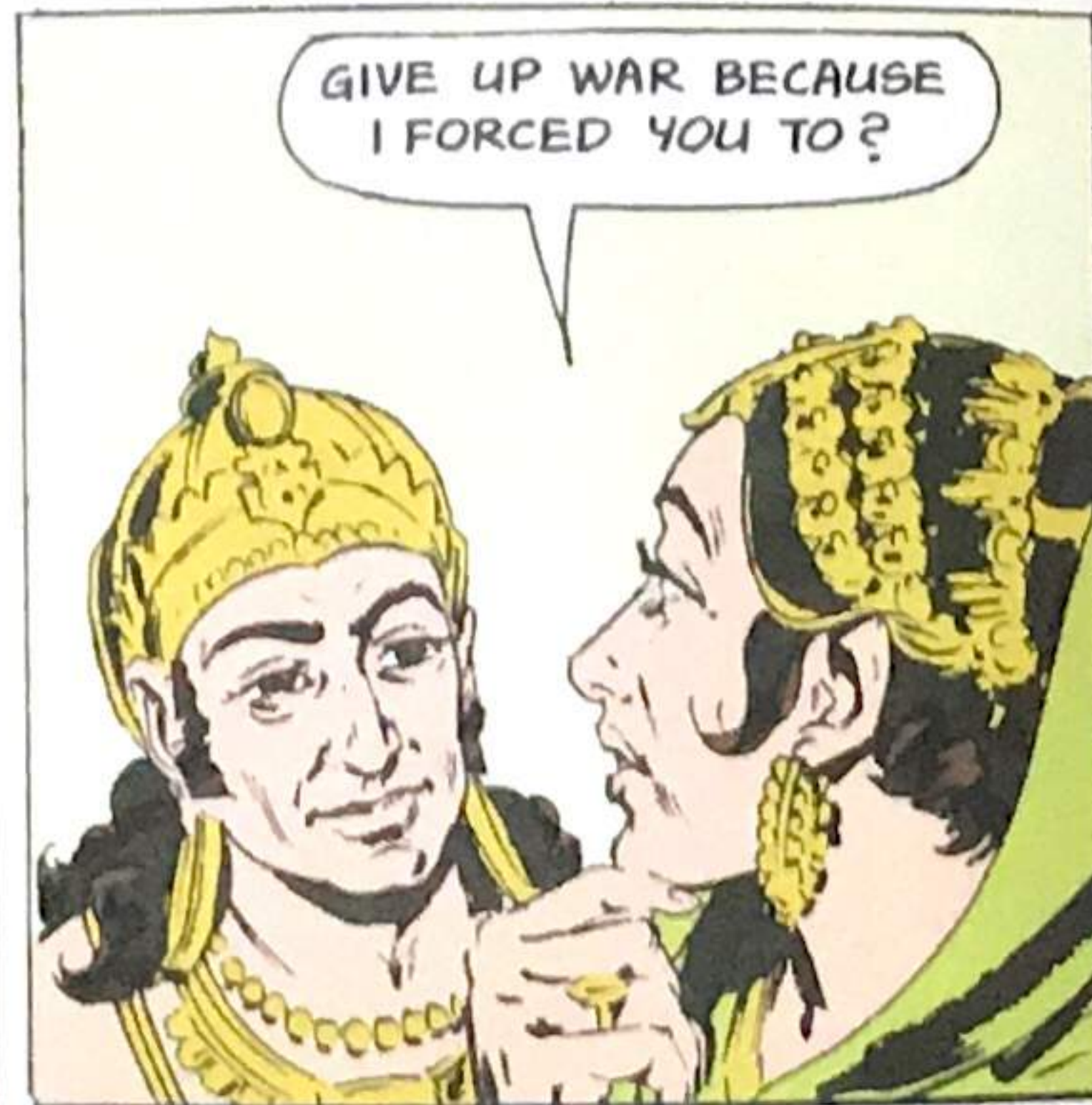


SHANTALA... SHANTALA, ARE YOU ALL RIGHT?

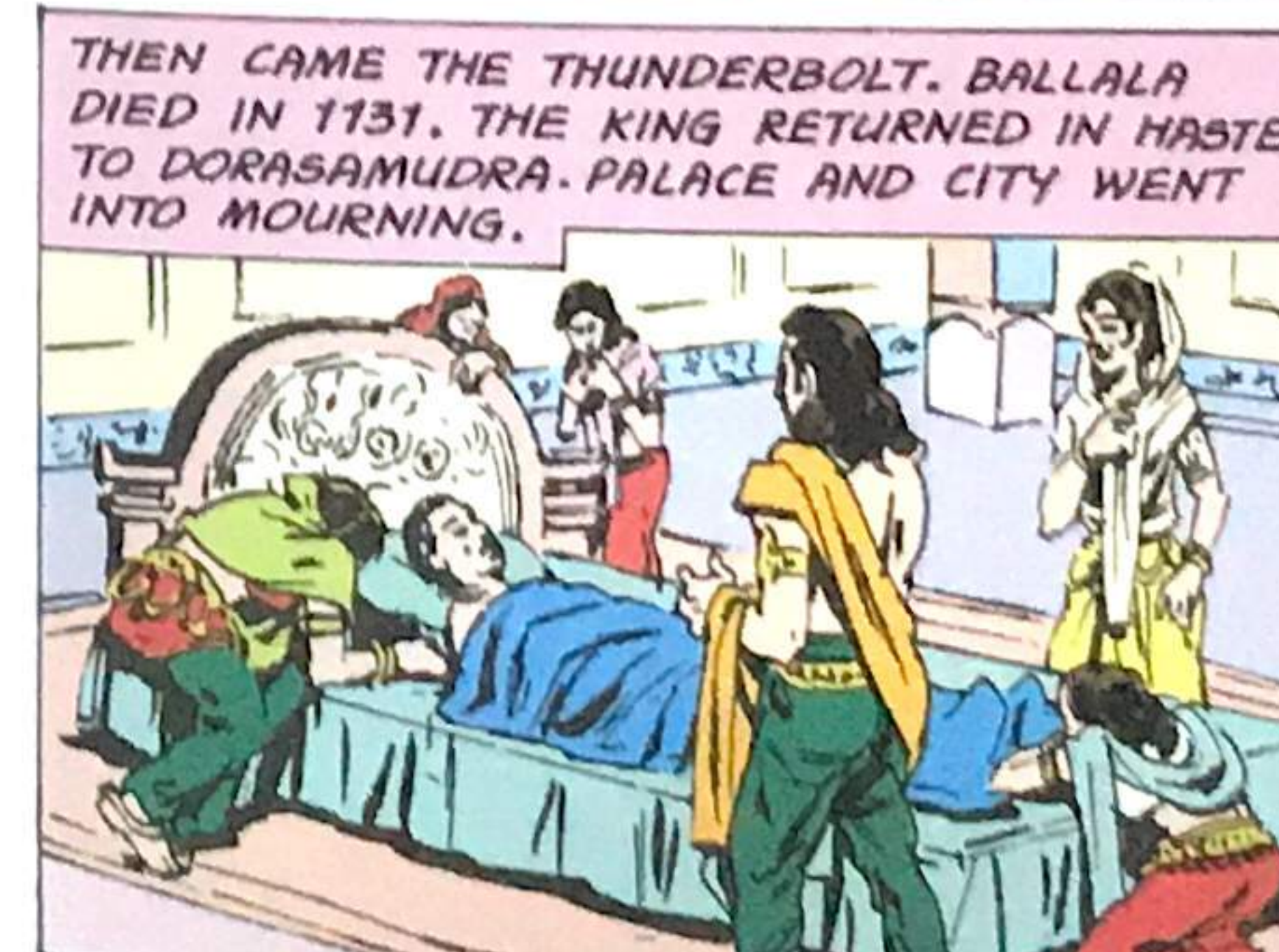
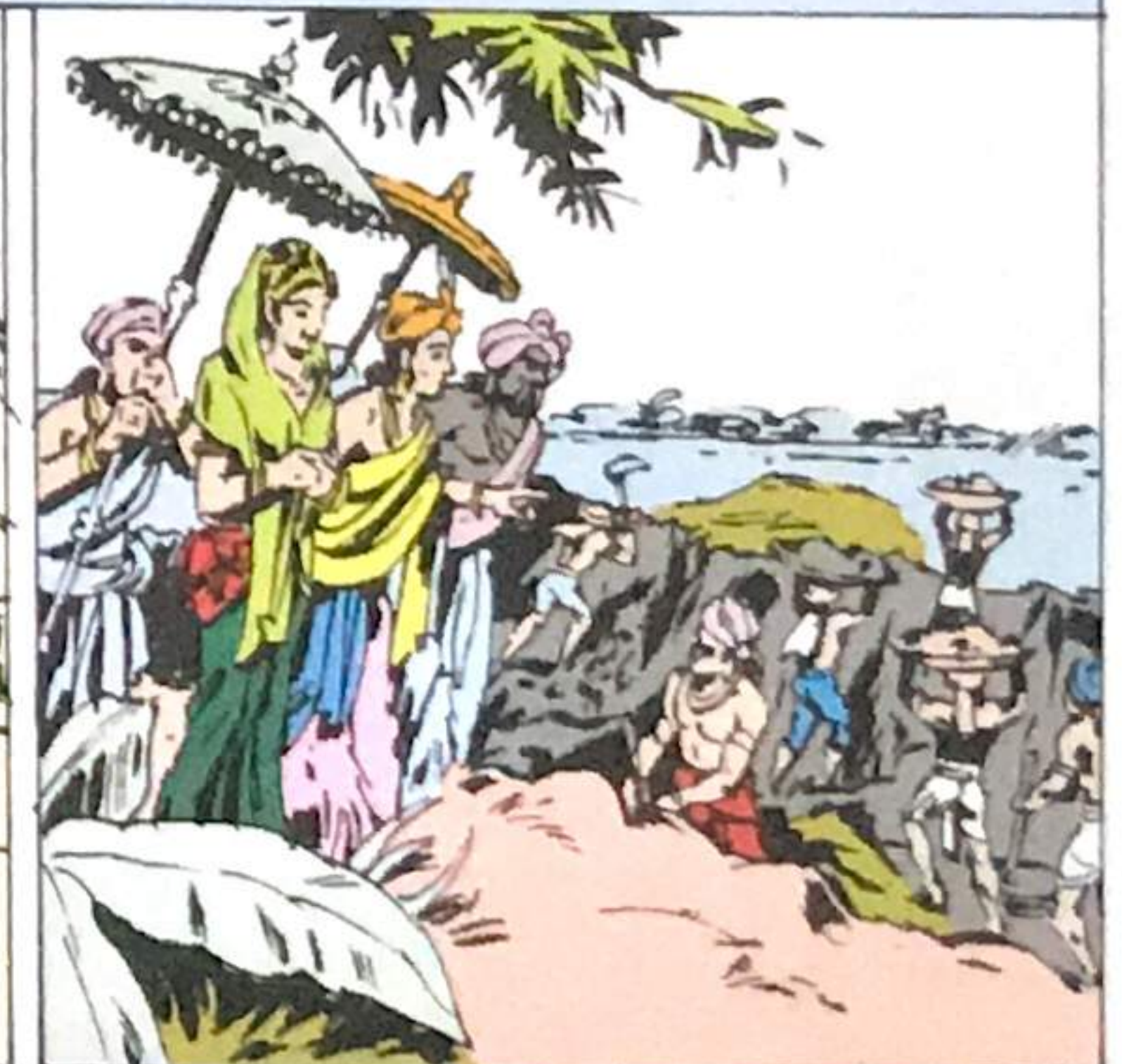


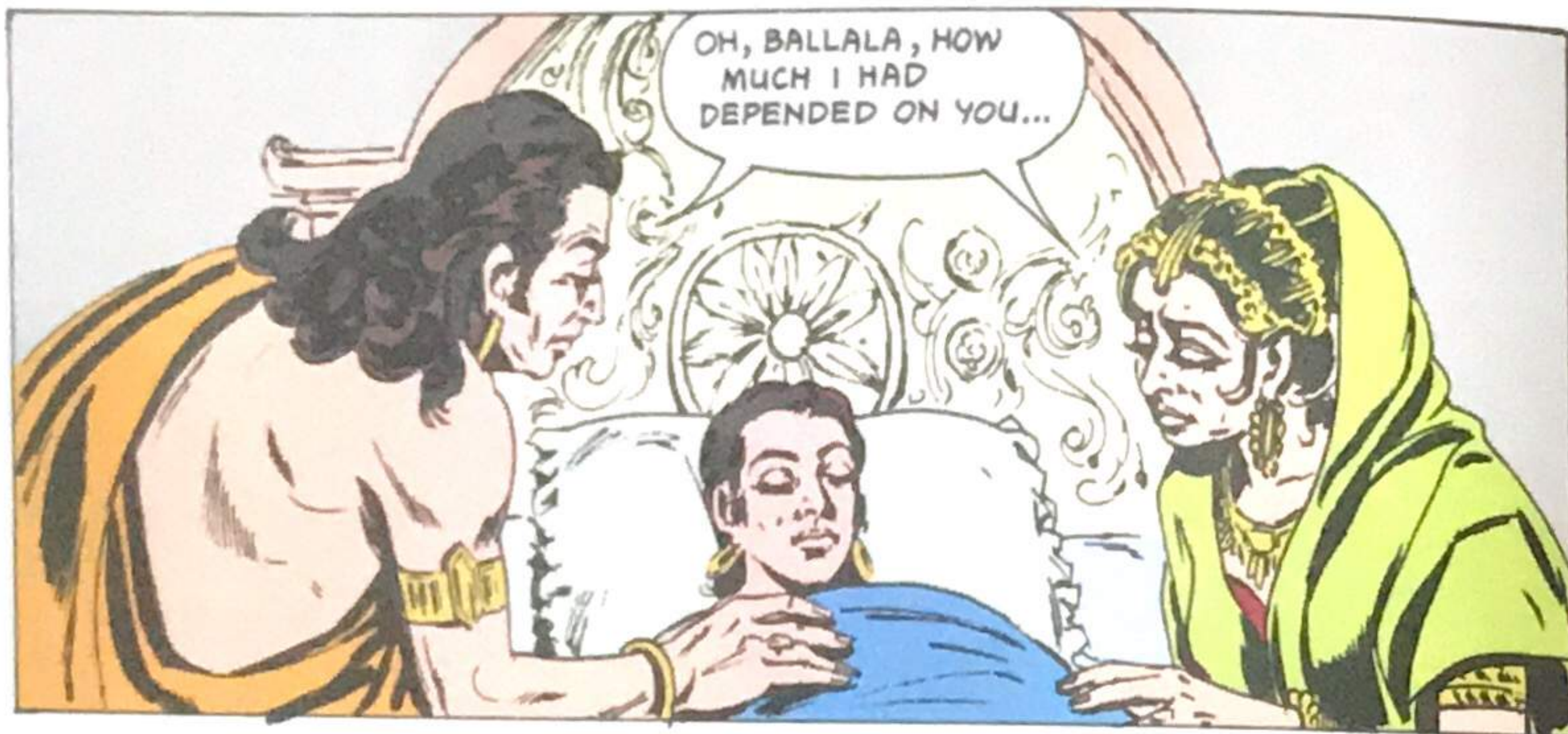
YES... PLEASE GO ON.





WHILE VISHNU VARDHANA REPEATEDLY DEFIED THE CHALUKYA EMPEROR, NOW GAINING SOME GROUND, NOW LOSING SOME, BALLALA MANAGED THE ADMINISTRATIVE AFFAIRS OF THE KINGDOM.





MONTHS LATER —



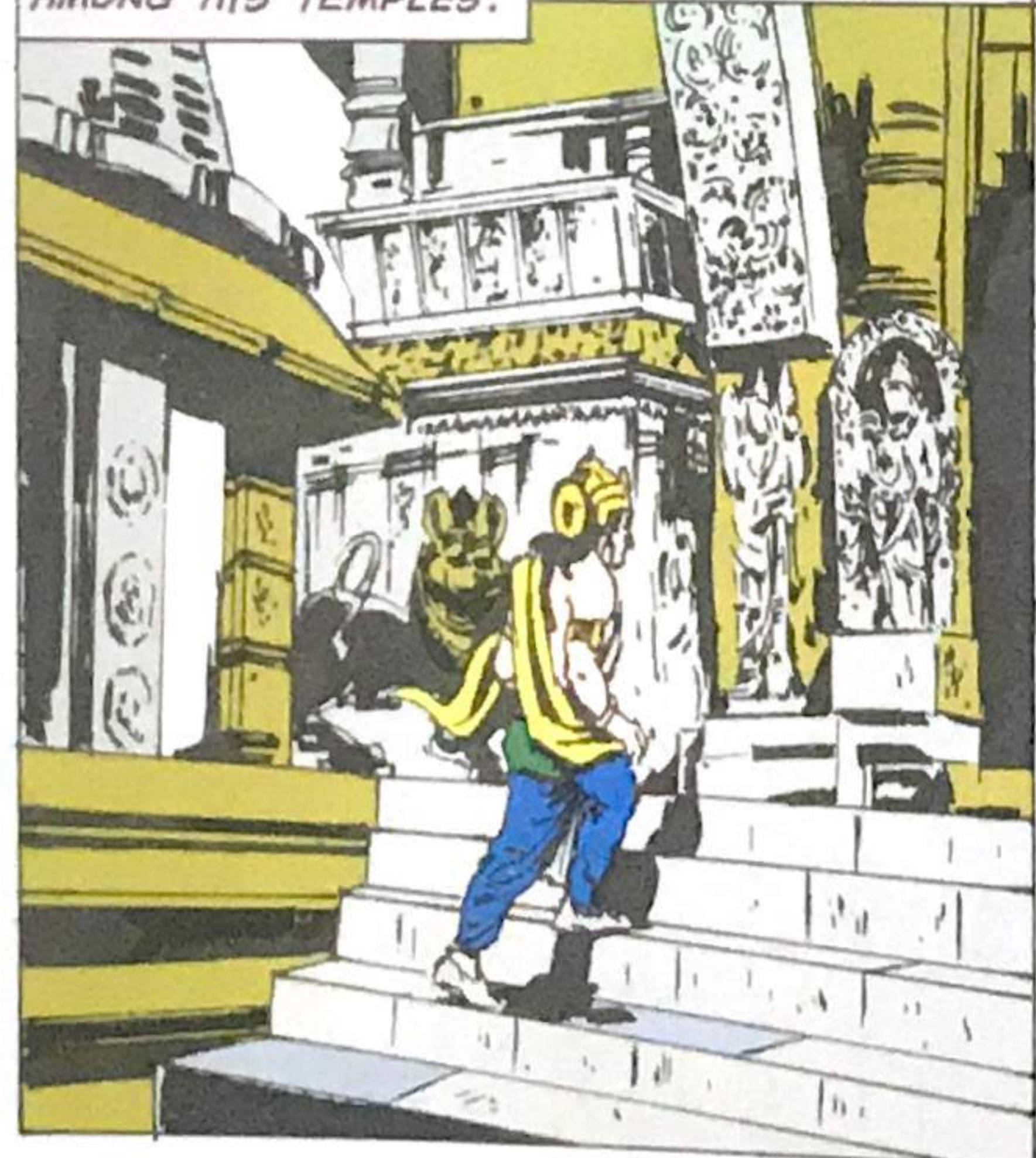
VISHNU VARDHANA RECEIVED THE NEWS WHEN HE WAS AT BANKAPURA, FIGHTING THE KADAMBAS.



MY LORD, I BELIEVE THAT LIFE, ANY LIFE, IS PRECIOUS.

WAS THAT WHY YOU GAVE IT UP? WAS IT BECAUSE THE MOST PRECIOUS THING YOU COULD SACRIFICE FOR A PRINCIPLE WAS YOUR OWN LIFE?

AFTER THIS, THOUGH VISHNU VARDHANA CONTINUED HIS POLICY OF AGGRESSION, HIS HEART WAS NO MORE IN IT. HE BEGAN TO SPEND MUCH OF HIS TIME WANDERING AMONG HIS TEMPLES.



HOW BEAUTIFUL ARE THE SCULPTURES OF DASOJA!



IT IS SHANTALA!

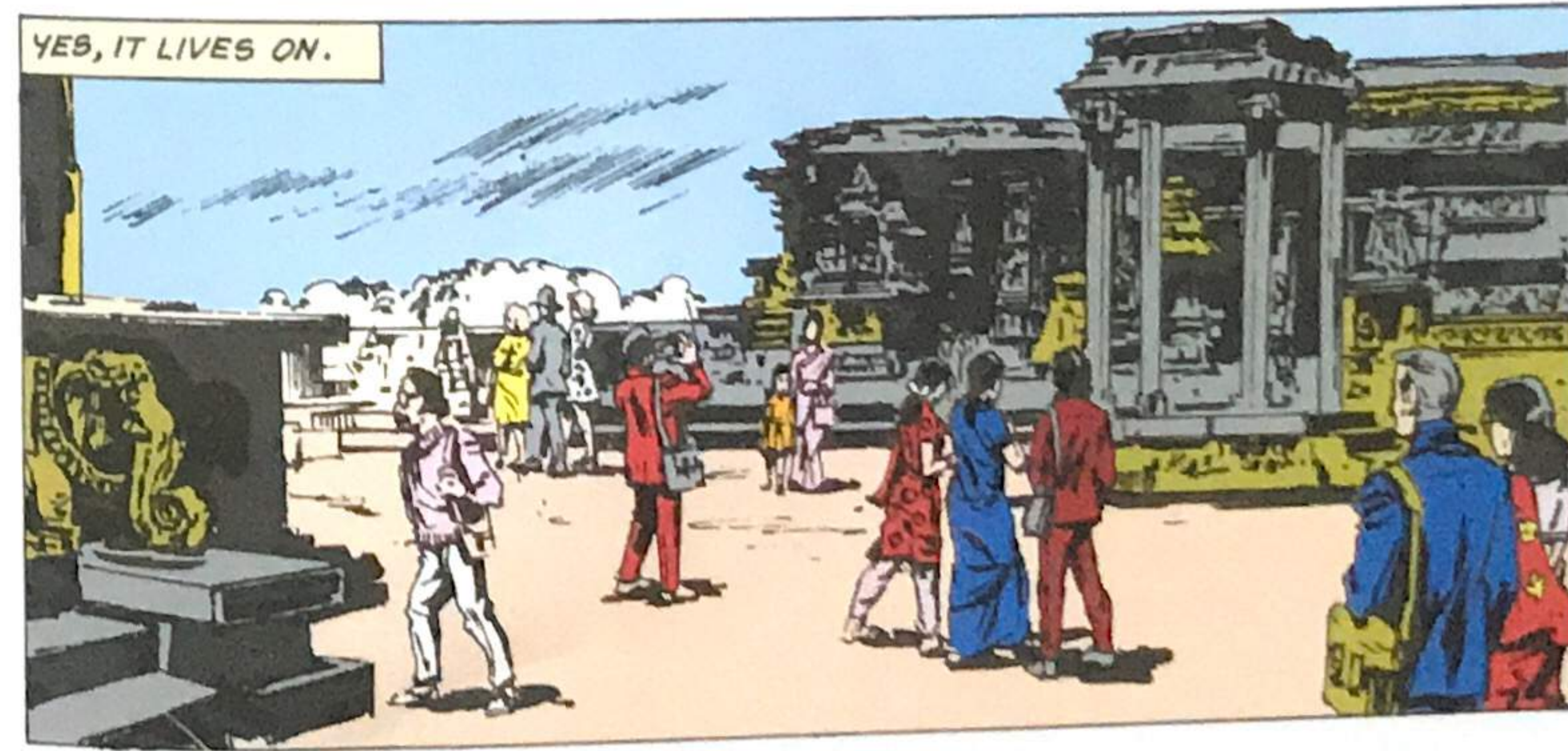


OH, MY QUEEN! O, SHANTALA!

LATER, AS VISHNU VARDHANA LEFT, HE LOOKED BACK AT THE VIJAYA NARAYANA TEMPLE.



ISN'T IT POSSIBLE THAT THIS SHRINE WILL LIVE ON, SPREADING THE GLORY OF THE HOYSALAS, WHEN MOST ELSE IS LOST AND FORGOTTEN?



YES, IT LIVES ON.